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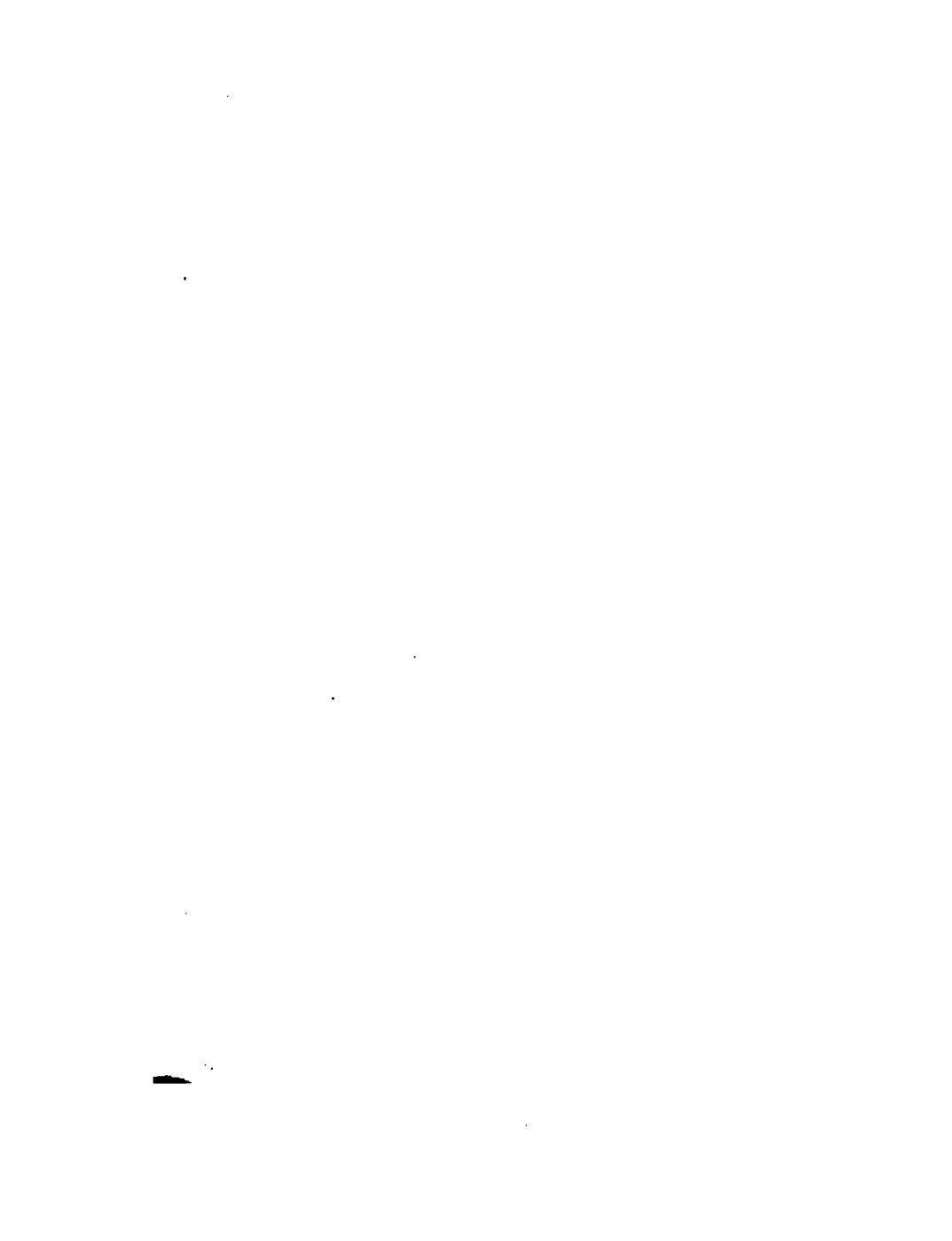
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THE
SAINTLY CALLING



REV.C.D. BELL M.A.





THE SAINTLY CALLING.

**PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY
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THE SAINTLY CALLING.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES D. BELL, M.A.,

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"MINERS' SONS," "CHRISTIAN WORSHIP," ETC.



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TO THE
CONGREGATIONS ASSEMBLING IN THE PARISH -
AND TEMPORARY CHURCHES,
The following Sermons,
PRINTED AT THE REQUEST OF MANY WHO HEARD THEM,
ARE INSCRIBED,
BY
THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND PASTOR,
CHARLES D. BELL.

CHELTENHAM, *Feb.* 1875.



P R E F A C E.

THE following Sermons are printed at the desire of many who heard them. The kindly feelings of my congregation have, doubtless, exaggerated their value; but if they be made instrumental in confirming the faith of my hearers or readers, and of keeping them in the good old paths, unmoved by the strange and abounding errors of the day, the author's object will be attained.

We must all sympathise in the effort to promote a higher attainment of holiness in the Christian Church; but we must beware of seeking good ends by unscriptural means, and of "darkening God's counsel by words without knowledge."

In this volume I have endeavoured to explain what I believe to be the teaching of Scripture on Sanctification. Let the doctrines stated be tested by the standard of God's unerring Word. If we speak not according to this, there is no light in us.

I cannot help regarding with suspicion some phrases current amongst a certain school at the pre-

sent day ; and which have been coined to describe a new experience in the way of holiness. These are “ Holiness by Faith,” “ the Higher Life,” “ entire consecration,” “ uniform victory over sin,” “ the possibilities of Faith : ” one of these possibilities being, as I see suggested in a recent pamphlet on Holiness, “ the eradication of our evil tendencies.” That is, as I understand the words, the possibilities of faith to exterminate “ the infection of nature in them that are regenerated,” and so to make us sinless. If “ Holiness by Faith ” means that salvation in its fullest sense, embracing sanctification, is the result of the Saviour’s obedience and sacrifice, and is to be received only by faith, then I fully assent to the doctrine ; but if it means that holiness through an act of faith is an immediate work (and it is in this latter sense the phrase is now generally understood), then I entirely dissent from it.

As to the teaching which emanates from the new school, I affirm that the Bible knows nothing of an instantaneous sinlessness by an act of faith, nothing of an instantaneous perfection through believing. Under whatever plausible name perfectionism may be hidden,—like the snake coiled up in the flower, such as “ entire consecration,” “ the rest of faith,” “ freedom from inward conflict,” the doctrine is unsanctioned by the Word of God. There is no promise of such a thing in its pages, no example of such a thing in its records ; not a saint in the

Old Testament or in the New was made perfect at once, or became perfect whilst in the flesh. They were men always pressing onward; confessing their constant sinfulness, and seeking continually for pardon. They all "groaned," as we do, in a body of humiliation; were all members, as we are, of an imperfect Church; all lived, as we do, in an imperfect world. This claim to perfection (for what is "the absolute consecration of every power, sensation, and longing to Christ," "the undeviating surrender of every part of the being to Him," but perfection?) is a claim not made by any of the prophets, or apostles, or martyrs who have gone before. It is to be feared that such a claim is Antinomian in its tendency, and that they who make it must lower the standard of holiness to bring it within man's reach, and minimise the evil of sin in order to escape its condemnation. May not the doctrine of an instantaneous holiness through faith have its rise in a sinful impatience which would outrun the will and outstrip the promises of God, and thus, though bearing a spiritual appearance, be in reality a work of the flesh? Growth is not only one of the natural laws of God in creation, but one of the spiritual laws of God in the new creation. Had God so willed it, the fruit might hang on the branches ripe and mellow without any intermediate stages of development; but God has appointed the gradual processes by which there is

the forming of the tender shoot, and the blooming of the beautiful blossom, and the slow maturing of the fruit—processes carried on through the frosts of winter, and the genial days of spring, and the warmth of summer sunshine. And so, no doubt, God is glorified by the progressive growth of the Christian, more or less rapid as it may be, and by the advance of his sanctification through conflict and imperfections and failure; for it is through this chequered experience that we are taught a deeper humility, a more entire dependence on the merits of Christ, and a more thorough trust in the grace of the Holy Spirit.

To quote the words of another—"This present season of conflict teaches us lessons respecting sin and holiness, grace and love, which we could never have personally learned if we had known no conflict, if, as soon as we believed, we had at once been taken into the perfection of heavenly rest." Whatever we might wish or desire as to sanctification being like justification, an act complete at once, and under no conditions of progress, and so to escape the pain and trouble of conflict, let us be willing to believe that God's way is the best way; and while we wait upon Him in faith and diligence and prayer, let us partake of the confidence that "He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

C O N T E N T S.



CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE SAINTLY CALLING	1
II. THE WILL OF GOD OUR SANCTIFICATION	21
III. THE BELIEVER RECKONING HIMSELF DEAD TO SIN	39
IV. THE SINLESS AIM, AND THE PROVISION FOR FAILURE	57
V. THE HOLINESS NECESSARY FOR THE VISION OF GOD	77
VI. SANCTIFICATION THROUGH THE TRUTH	99
VII. THE SAINT'S CONFLICT, AND THE SAINT'S VICTORY	119
VIII. THE SAINT'S GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION	141
IX. THE SAINT'S LIFE-WORK	161
X. THE SAINT PRESSING ONWARD	181

I.

THE SAINTLY CALLING.

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I.

THE SAINTLY CALLING.

“To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints : Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”—ROMANS i. 7.

In these beautiful words the apostle addresses the Church at Rome. He is writing to those in that city who had been “called out of the darkness” of heathenism into the marvellous light of the gospel of Christ. They had abandoned their old idolatry and superstition for the pure worship and holy service of the crucified Nazarene. The gospel had been to them “the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation.” At least, St Paul assumes as much. He takes them on their profession. They had been baptized into the Christian faith, and were members of a Christian Church, and he addresses them accordingly as true believers, and as heirs of the promises which are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. It may have been that whilst all were called externally, some may not have been called effectually. Still, as they were in visible communion

with the Church, he writes to them as the "beloved of God," and as "called to be Saints;" and he salutes them in the beautiful words, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." It is in the same manner that he addresses other Churches. He dedicates one epistle to "the Saints at Ephesus;" another to "the Saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi;" and another "to all the Saints and faithful brethren which are in Christ at Colosse." From which it is quite clear that the apostle assumes that they who called themselves Christians were sincere in their profession, and that, exercising the judgment of charity, he writes to them as true believers in the Lord, and as members of that one body of which He is the Head. And it is also abundantly clear that St Paul considered Saintship to be a privilege which may be enjoyed in this life. It is not in another world that we reach "Saintship," but here. A false Church, one which has corrupted the truth, when a certain time has elapsed after their death, canonises those of her communion whom she considers to have been eminent for their holiness, and places them in the catalogue of her "Saints," and orders a certain reverence to be paid at their shrines, and pilgrimages to be made to their tombs. But, brethren, Saintship begins on earth. It is not only "the spirits of just men made perfect," and which have passed out of the conflict and the sorrow, that have

attained the Saintly condition ; but all, every-where, who, by their union with Christ, have been justified and sanctified, and who, being dedicated to God's service, reflect His image and show forth His glory.

And now, on the threshold, let me say that there is nothing so desirable as Saintship. There is no character so high, so noble, so grand, if the Word of God be true, as that of Saints. The Bible throws a rare beauty and attractiveness round the saintly calling. The indispensable qualification for heaven is sanctification. "The will of God" in heaven "is our sanctification." "God has called us unto holiness." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and the exhortation which God lays on the hearts of all who would enter His presence is this, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

To the Saints all blessed promises are made ; for the Saints all glorious things are reserved. "God preserveth the soul of His Saints ;" "He keepeth their feet ;" "they are all in His hand ;" "their death is precious in His sight." When the Lord comes, it is to be "glorified in His Saints ;" "they walk in white" in the New Jeru-salem ; "they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth ;" "they stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire, having the harps of God ;" and "they sing the new song" which belongeth to those who are "redeemed from the earth." Such being the

case, as all grandeur and all glory is connected with Saintship, it is very needful that we should know "what is the hope of the divine calling, and what the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the Saints." I shall, therefore, take up for our consideration "the Saintly calling," looking at it in various aspects, and setting it before you in the light of revealed truth. The subject is prominent in the thoughts of Christians at the present day, but, alas ! much has been said upon it which tends to obscure rather than enlighten the revealed will of God. And some, in calling us to "follow after holiness," would persuade us to leave the old paths, well beaten by many a Saint of God, for a new and untrodden way. To all who pretend to set forth discoveries in the way of holiness, we may safely apply the proverb, "What is new in them is not true, and what is true is not new."

Rather would I counsel you in words which God addresses to His people, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." "May God give us a right judgment in all things," and vouchsafe His blessing, as we consider together what His Word says to us on the subject of "the Saintly calling"!

It is to the present "Saintship" of the believers that I wish to direct your attention in this opening discourse. Separating the words from their con-

text, I take as my subject the expression, "Called to be Saints," hoping to find in it much that is "profitable for our instruction in righteousness."

"Called to be Saints."

Here I might address you all as being in visible communion with the Church—as baptized, and therefore separated solemnly to God—as confirmed, many of you, and therefore by your own deliberate act set apart to Christ as His. Taking you thus upon your profession, I might speak to you as having a fellowship with the whole family of God in earth and heaven.

For, brethren, however you may deny your calling, however you may despise, neglect it, or live in indifference to it, yet by the Christian privileges which you enjoy, by the Christian ordinances of which you partake, by the invitations of the gospel sounded again and again in your ears, you are called—externally "called to be Saints."

But I prefer to restrict these words to those who have been "called" effectually by the grace of God working in them, and who, being "temples of the Holy Ghost," and "renewed in the spirits of their mind," are separated from the world, and set apart to the service of God.

Now, when we speak of Saintship, we must never forget the source from whence it springs. Sinners are "called of God," because they have been chosen of God. We must trace the stream of grace back to its great fountain-head. The pure

river of the water of life proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Salvation springs from God's eternal love; and as I know of no truth that more cheers the soul, so I know of no truth that more humbles the mind, than the consciousness that it is not of merit, but of mercy, that we are saved—"Not of works, lest any man should boast." All good comes from God. "He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." To use the words of God Himself, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

But if "Saintship" lies in the eternal appointment of God, which is the root and beginning of all that is good, what are the means by which the sinner is raised to character and attainment so high? How do we become Saints?

There is no question more important for us than this, How can the sinner become a Saint? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" I am told that in heaven there is "a great multitude which no man can number, and which stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;" and I long to know how they came there. "Who are these?" I ask, "and whence came they?" Let God Himself answer through the lips of the

Elder : " These are they which came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." It is through the sacrifice of Christ that we are saved from our sins, both in their guilt and power.

" This is the will of God, even your sanctification," writes St Paul. And again he says, " By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the blood of Jesus Christ once for all."

By the sacrifice on the cross we are justified, and by this we are sanctified, dedicated to God, consecrated to His service. " The Lord Jesus has by Himself purged our sins," and by faith in Him we are saved. So that for " the Saintly calling " there is needed the pardon of sin, and reconciliation with God through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and without this there can be no access to God and no entrance into heaven.

Brethren, for Saintship, you must wash in the fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness, and you must have the witness of the Spirit within you, that, through the precious blood of Christ, you are clean, " without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing." The guilt of the past must be done away, blotted out, cancelled, before you can worship God " in the beauty of holiness." And I lay the more stress upon this, because there are many who invert the order established in the kingdom of grace, and place holiness before forgiveness. I believe it to be a common, as it is a most dangerous

wile of the devil, to persuade men, that holiness is a condition of acceptance with Christ. Thus Satan deludes many souls; for when conscience becomes uneasy, and men grow anxious about their eternal interests, and wish to escape out of the city of destruction, he sends them off in a wrong direction, and turns them away from the cross of Christ. It were a fatal error to make our pardon rest upon our holiness, not our holiness upon our pardon; to regard good works, not as the result, but the cause of saving mercy; and, mistaking the fruit for the root, to fancy that God forgives men because they are holy, when, in point of fact, He makes them holy just because they are "accepted in the Beloved." We work, not for life, but from life. It is when, through believing in Christ, we become one with Him, grafted into Him as the branch is grafted into the vine, united to Him as the limb is to the body, that through this union and engrafting immediately the Holy Ghost flows into the soul—that Holy Ghost which is the Author and Giver of all life. He slays the enmity of the carnal mind, and sheds abroad in the heart the love of God. He purifies the affections, elevates the desires, spiritualises the tastes, enlightens the mind, and changes the whole man. And now the internal consecration begins. Now you present yourselves, your souls and bodies, to be living, and reasonable, and holy sacrifices unto God. Now "the love of Christ constrains you to

live not unto yourselves, but unto Him who died for you, and rose again." Prayer is a pleasure—the Word of God a delight—the Lord's house a sanctuary—communion with His people a privilege; and when you come to the holy table, you feel that you are entering your Master's "banqueting-house," and that His "banner over you is Love." I believe that this is the felt-experience of all who are beloved of God—"called to be Saints."

Other signs than these follow them that believe. There is a daily growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The natural passions are being gradually subdued, and the body kept under, and brought into subjection. "The weight" that would hinder us in running the Christian race is being more and more laid aside, and "the besetting sin" is being more habitually overcome. The temper that was irritable is controlled; the tongue that was sharp and bitter is "bridled;" the spirit that was hasty is restrained; the proud will is bent and subdued; and the affections that once were entangled in the world are now turned to heaven, and set upon the things which are above. The inner life of grace begins more and more to rule the outer life of nature, and in the war and strife of the two contrary principles, the flesh and the Spirit, the heavenly overpowers the earthly, and with resistless power quells and keeps it down.

Nor is this all ; there is not only the resistance of evil, there is also the cultivation of all that is “lovely and of good report,” and devotion to every good work. Whatever is holy is congenial to him that is “called to be a Saint.” He is drawn to it irresistibly ; and that not so much by effort and constraint, as by a law of his new being which is in harmony with all that is holy and pure. And so his path is an upward one and an onward one. “Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” There is about the Saint a likeness to Christ, a conformity to “the Man of Sorrows,” which cannot be mistaken. He has the mind in him which was also in Christ Jesus ; and “clothing himself with humility,” he ever takes the lowest seat, and, with the apostle, counts himself “less than the least of all Saints,” and “esteems others better than himself.” He walks in love as a dear child of God ; and manifesting by his walk that “the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, he proves what is acceptable unto the Lord.” He lives for others ; “looks not on his own things, but theirs ;” “seeks not his own wealth, but theirs ;” “he puts on, as one of the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and is forbearing, tender-hearted ; forgiving all offenders,

even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven him." When he suffers wrongfully, he "endures grief for conscience toward God;" remembering that "even hereunto is he called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps ; who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth ; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not : but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." The Saint does not covet sorrow,—nay, rather shrinks from it: would pray that the cup might pass from his lips, with the agonising cry, "If it be possible!" But when God sends it, he bows the head with the words, "Not my will, but Thine be done." He has no pleasure in the cross with its sharp nails and painful burden, but when God lays it on his back, he carries it cheerfully, and is strong to suffer through "the grace that is sufficient" for all that need, and through "the strength that is made perfect in our weakness." The cares of life, he casts them upon his Father in heaven ; its anxieties and circumstances he commits unto Him whose he is, and whom he serves, and who has promised that these and all "other things shall work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to His purpose." He knows that there is a divine alchemy which can change crosses into crowns, sighs into songs, tears into jewels, and cause "the light affliction, which is

but for a moment, to work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Then how is it with the Saint and the world? "The world" is one of the three great enemies of the Christian, and as formidable as either "the flesh" or "the devil." It is most subtle and ensnaring, and by appealing to all that is congenial to the natural heart,—to its pride and ambition, its love of pleasure, and self-indulgence, and reputation amongst men,—it seeks to overcome us in its snares. But he that is "beloved of God, called to be a Saint," overcomes the world by the victories of faith. He can be in it, and yet not of it. Because of the purer tastes and the higher enjoyments which are now his, the world grows very little in his eyes; the difficulty of giving it up becomes small, and he wonders that its follies and fashions, its amusements and temptations, should be placed by any for one moment in comparison with that "kingdom of God which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The world daily grows less in his sight, because he is rising above it, and ascending to a higher region; and the fashion of the world seems ever passing away, because he himself is ever passing and pressing on the way to heaven.

There is more even than this in Saintship. The religion of him who is "called to be a Saint" consists not in passive, but in active piety.

There is a great deal of misconception on this subject. The saint of the Romish Church, the saint of the painter and the poet, is the pale and worn ascetic, who fasts, and tell his beads, and keeps midnight vigil, and goes through a monotonous routine of prayer, within the walls of a monastery ; or is the woman who, taking the veil, and renouncing society, retires from the world to the weary seclusion or dreary cloisters of a convent. This is the sentimentalism of saintship. Not such the saintship of the New Testament. See this exemplified in that Divine Man who, whilst He at times withdrew to the lonely desert, and spent often whole nights in prayer, taught in the synagogue, frequented the towns of Galilee, and mingled in the throng that crowded the streets of Jerusalem. He is our example, who, wherever He went, went about doing good, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, pleading the cause of the fatherless and the widow, receiving the penitent, and earning for Himself this noble opprobrium, "The friend of publicans and sinners." The truest piety is that which is the busiest, has its hand full of good works, often turns its footsteps to the homes of the poor, and the sick and the suffering, and the ignorant ; " visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction," and throws itself with eager zeal and a whole heart into the cause of Christ and the service of men. Brother, am I setting before you too high an attainment ?

Am I drawing a character that is wholly ideal? I think not. I do not say that Saints will ever arrive at perfection here, that they will never fall into sin; for the history of the best, and each man's own sad and sorrowful personal experience, prove to our shame and sorrow that they do: but their sins are the occasion of holy sorrows, and they repair to the fountain where, weeping, they wash away their guilt in the blood of Jesus; and they are taught by their very falls to walk more softly, humbly, prayerfully, and circumspectly. So was it with Peter; so is it with all who are "beloved of God, called to be Saints."

Let me now ask if I have in any measure sketched your character in describing that of a "Saint"? Some of you may have attained to all that I have been speaking of, but many of you may fall far short of it.

There is a good deal said in the present day, and much that is unscriptural, about "perfectionism" and "holiness by faith;" and there never was a time when we needed more to pray for "a right judgment in all things," and for wisdom to "try the spirits whether they be of God." Whatever men may say—using new terms for what they call "a new experience"—"about the rest of faith," "the sabbath of the soul," "the higher life," the "cessation of conflict from within,"—you and I will find that to the end a warfare will have to be waged between

the old man and the new; that “the lust of the flesh doth remain even in them that are regenerate;” and that it is only by constant prayer and vigilance, and by standing ever on our guard, that we are enabled to overcome. That we do not more habitually overcome is our own fault; for, fighting in the strength of divine grace, Christ our watchword, and victory our aim, and taking to ourselves the whole armour of God, we shall be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Oh, let us seek to maintain “a closer walk with God;” let us give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; for thus “working out our salvation with fear and trembling,” while God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and thus “growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” we shall be holier—much holier—than we are. Our life will rise into a happy illustration of these noble and beautiful emblems—“The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;” “they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Friends and fellow-men, let us, in “that strength which is made perfect in our weakness, strive after a more holy life, and “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,” maintaining an attitude of determined hostility against evil, and a spirit of resolute endeavour to be “blameless

and harmless" in the midst of a wicked and perverse world. Oh, there is a beauty in holiness which glorifies the meanest Saint, and sheds on his character the light of heaven. The King's daughter is "all glorious within ;" she is glorious with the inward graces of faith and love, humility and hope; she adorns herself for her Lord with the ornaments of "a meek and quiet spirit," and with "whatsoever things are pure and lovely, and of good report." Let us put on such adorning as this, remembering that in the sight of God it is of great price. Ours be the privilege to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." And let us begin to clothe ourselves in the beauties of holiness to-day. If duties have been consciously neglected, let us begin to perform them. If sins have been knowingly committed, let us at once cast them aside, and "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, let us perfect holiness in the fear of God." There will be nothing dreamy in this, nothing mystical, nothing fitful or emotional; but a daily, humble, quiet, patient walk in love, in lowliness, in long-suffering, in meekness, and goodness, and truth. There is no need for us to go outside our own circle, or the position in which we are placed by the wise providence of God; no need to seek large spheres or great missions ; the home life will be all-sufficient, and in this unnumbered opportunities will present themselves to glorify God and to benefit man.

"The common round, the daily task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask,
Room to deny ourselves—a road
Daily to lead us nearer God."

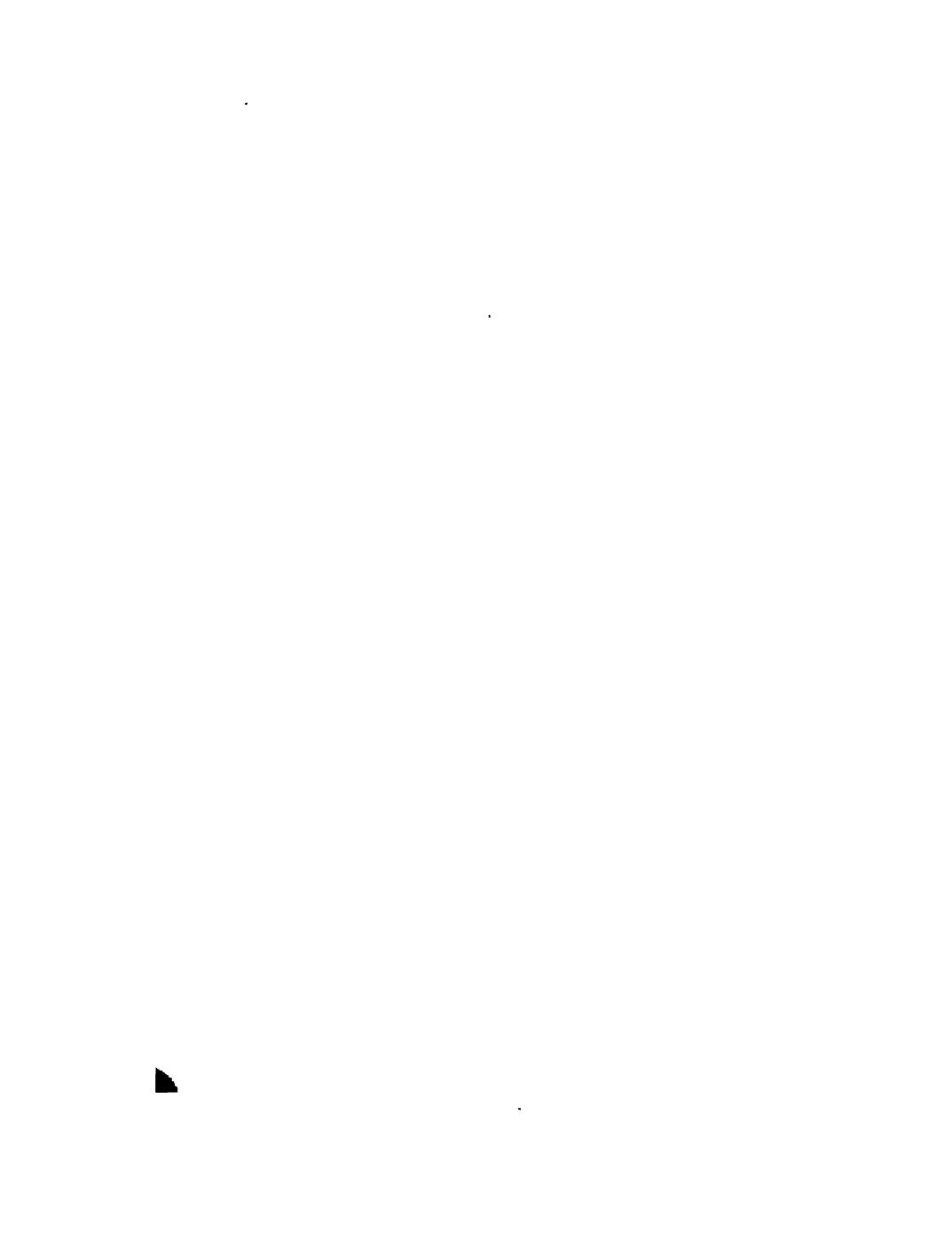
So denying ourselves, and living nearer to God, we shall ever be "meetening for the inheritance of the saints in light," realising our heavenly citizenship, and having a fellowship and communion with those blessed ones who walk in white before the throne, for they are worthy; and who ever pursue their saintly offices in the presence of God and of the Lamb. We, too, when the fight is fought out and the course finished, shall join that happy throng, and with them be "presented faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy."

But whilst I speak thus, let us always remember that all saintliness is nothing without Christ. We must ever be looking to Christ, ever leaning on Christ, ever laying hold of Christ, ever having recourse to Christ, and "that blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin." We can never get beyond the cross. Here we began when we first "fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel;" and here we must end, when "the earthly house of this tabernacle is about to be dissolved," and we are about to enter "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Christ's merit is our passport to life; His righteousness is the robe in which we

are to appear before God. He crowns in glory the work which He began in grace ; and when we come into His presence, we shall fall down before His footstool to cry, “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” In the consciousness of many sins, in the retrospect of many failures, I thank God more and more for these precious words, the basis of my hopes, and the ground of my assurance—“ He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” and “ ye are complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power.”

II.

*THE WILL OF GOD OUR
SANCTIFICATION.*



II.

THE WILL OF GOD OUR SANCTIFICATION.

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."
—1 THESS. iv. 3.

SUCH importance did Martin Luther attach to the doctrine of justification by faith in the merits and death of Christ, that he called it "the Article of a standing or falling church." Salvation through faith dislodges all confidence in our own works; it sweeps them away as grounds of a sinner's justification in the sight of God, and his acquittal at the bar of judgment. A very remarkable illustration of this is found in the history of that noble man and eminent Reformer to whom I have referred, and who with bold and dauntless spirit faced the dangers and conquered the difficulties he had to encounter when confronted with Rome. While he was reading the Bible on one occasion, seeking there for comfort for a sorely wounded spirit, his eye fell on the words, "The just shall live by faith;" and out of that statement sprang the noblest revolution the world has ever seen—

24 THE WILL OF GOD OUR SANCTIFICATION.

"the Reformation." Receiving the truth in the love of it, Luther cast aside the mental and moral fetters with which he was bound, and declared himself the freeman of God and of Christ.

Taking these words, and using them as a trenchant axe, fearless of man, and trusting in God, he split up, root and branch, the hoary and gigantic tree of Romish superstition. Thus did Martin Luther, sweeping away all refuges of lies, removing from the Church all that had not the sanction of Scripture, stripping it of those human inventions and superstitious observances beneath which genuine Christianity was wellnigh buried, bring to light this central truth of the Bible—this on which I lay the greatest stress, and rest my strongest hopes—that we are justified freely by God's grace "through faith," and not of works; and that "the gift of God is eternal life through Christ our Lord."

But there is another doctrine of the gospel equally important with that of justification, namely, Sanctification.

"Do we then make void the law through faith?" asks St Paul. Some have done so. Wild in their extravagance, and bold in their fanaticism, men have risen in every age to trouble the Church, and bring the gospel of grace into contempt, by saying that we may "continue in sin that grace may abound." From such Antinomian and immoral doctrines—doctrines equally fatal to all the inte-

rests of society, as well as destructive of the peace and purity of the Church—the true believer shrinks with holy abhorrence ; this is his language,—“ My soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.” I know that St Paul says, “ We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we are held ; ” but are we delivered that we may sin ? A thousand times, No ! God forbid ! We are delivered that we may serve God—serve Him with a purer, better, truer service—“ serve Him in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” Knowing ourselves to be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we remember thankfully that “ He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” These the believer will always be careful to maintain ; and longing, as he does, after a growing holiness, his desires will shoot upward to the skies ; and while he rejoices in a full and free salvation through faith in the blood of Christ, he will rejoice no less in such a statement as that contained in the text,—“ This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

The subject which lies before us is “ Sanctification.” It is a subject of the deepest importance ; and among the many errors which have crept into the Church of Christ, none are more dangerous than those which are connected with this doctrine.

Men's minds are greatly exercised upon it just now, and many things have been said and written upon it which have no authority in the Word of God.

Now the word "Sanctification" is used in two senses in the Bible, and these it is very important that we should distinctly understand, and endeavour to keep in mind. To "sanctify" means, in its primary signification, to separate from common and profane uses, and to set apart to the service of God. It is a word borrowed from the Levitical dispensation. Thus, in the Old Testament, we find that certain seasons, and places, and things, and men, were more especially consecrated unto God. Thus the Lord "sanctified the seventh day;" and thus severing the nation of Israel from the rest of the world, He set them apart as a peculiar people to Himself; and thus also did He sanctify the first-born. In the same sense "the tabernacle," and "the vessels of the tabernacle, were sanctified," set apart, that is, for the special service and worship of God.

Passing on to the New Testament, we find that the word has the same meaning there in a variety of passages. Thus in the 10th chapter of St John, and the 36th verse, it is written, "Say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest because I said I am the Son of God?"

Now here there can be no doubt whatever as to the meaning of the word "Sanctified." Anything

which implied the idea of gradual progress and advancement in holiness would be quite foreign to our Lord's meaning. The passage refers to Christ's being "set apart" by His Father to a certain work for the accomplishment of which He left heaven and took upon Him our nature—that work being the redemption of sinners by the sacrifice of Himself. To this solemn office He was "set apart," or consecrated by the Holy Ghost.

Again, in the Acts of the Apostles, the 26th chapter and 18th verse, when Paul is relating to King Agrippa the circumstances of his conversion, and the commission which had been given him by Christ to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, he uses the same remarkable word, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are 'sanctified' by faith that is in me."

Now here the word "Sanctified" means precisely the same as it did in the former passage. It signifies that act of "setting apart," or "consecration," by which God's people are engaged to serve Him from the moment they truly believe in Jesus. The very same use of the term is to be found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the 1st chapter and 2d verse:—"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are 'sanctified' in Christ Jesus,"—that is

to say, “set apart” to God by virtue of their union with the Saviour. The word does not refer to a process going on, but to an act done, by which the Corinthian believers were placed in a new position, and consecrated to the service of Him who bought them with His blood. I may remind you, that whenever we find the apostles addressing the elect by the title of “Saints,”—that is, as a people “set apart,”—or whenever they employ such language as the following—“By the which will we are *sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,”—the same idea runs through their words; they are speaking not of a gradual progress in holiness, but of the act by which the believer in Christ is separated from the world, and consecrated to the service of God. “Sanctification,” in this sense, is incapable of degree; the youngest and weakest believer is as “complete in Christ,” as fully “accepted in the Beloved,” as entirely severed from the world, and made over to God, as the Christian of long standing and matured experience.

Now there must be this “Sanctification,” this “being set apart” to God’s service, in the case of every true child of God. This act stands at the very beginning of the Christian life, and is introductory to the “Sanctification” which, in its secondary sense, means a gradual progress in holiness, an ever-deepening growth in grace, by the power and unction of the Holy Spirit. To be saved, a sinner must not only be outwardly “set

apart," but inwardly renewed by the Holy Ghost. And wherefore? Because by nature man is fallen and corrupt, a servant of sin and Satan.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God," and the carnal mind dwells not only in the profligate, the cruel, the unjust, the openly wicked and depraved, but also in all those who, living only to please themselves, are practically "living without God in the world." This may sound harsh—it may be a hard saying; but it is the truth. There is thought to be a great difference, and there *is* a great difference, between the immoral and profane and vicious, and those who are endowed with many lovely and pleasant virtues, who are pure and upright and refined; but the cultivated and refined mind may show itself quite as much the servant of Satan, by its enmity to holiness, and by its hatred to all spiritual religion, as the lower, and more debased mind, which indulges in the foul pleasures of a gross and revolting debauchery. In order to "sanctify" men, or "set them apart" from the service of sin to the service of God, their *hearts* must be changed; the love of God must be written there; the carnal mind must be removed, and the spiritual mind be implanted in its stead. And so these expressions are used with respect to the people of God: they have "passed from death unto life;" they are "made new creatures in Christ Jesus;" they are "translated from darkness unto light." Now, this change, which passes

over the Christian through virtue of his union with Christ, is specially the work of the Spirit of God. And here mark,—the Spirit's work is not an independent work. The Spirit is as much engaged in that everlasting covenant of redemption, which secures salvation to all the people of God, as the Father or the Son. The Holy Ghost gives to the soul of the believer light and knowledge, the evidence and experience of divine things; and He does this according to His covenant engagement; and therefore it is thus written in the 1st chapter of the First Epistle of Peter, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” The Trinity is engaged in the salvation of the elect. Salvation designed, salvation executed, salvation applied—this is the gospel news: it tells us of a God who wills, a God who works, a God who handles the remedy, and who makes use of it for the cure of diseased souls. Various as are the persons and the offices of the Godhead, “the Three that bear record in heaven” are one in mind and one in intention; consequently, when one acts all act. There is no separate agency, no such thing as being the subject of the operation of the Third Person, and yet not the subject of the operations of the First and Second. One in purpose and one in working, however the Godhead may distribute into different

channels the gifts of heavenly loving-kindness, yet these gifts must always meet in one and the same soul, assembling into one common centre the blessings which flow from three separate sources ; so that a man cannot be justified without being sanctified, nor can he be sanctified without being justified. You cannot separate the two in practice, any more than you can separate the convex from the concave. The two blessings, though easily separated in theory and in thought, are yet so closely connected, that the one cannot exist without the other. God is no imperfect workman, half saving a man. With the title to heaven He also confers a meetness for heaven. And it should comfort and encourage all who are at times cast down by reason of indwelling sin and remaining corruption, that "He that hath begun a good work will carry it on unto the day of the Lord Jesus, for this is the will of God ;" and that will shall be perfected in all His people : "This is the will of God, even your Sanctification."

You understand, then, the primary meaning of Sanctification. It is the setting apart of a peculiar people to God, their consecration to Himself as His priests, through their union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. It is an act done at once and for ever. "By the which will we are sanctified, by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

We now come to what may be called the secon-

dary view of the subject. "Sanctification" also means a gradual advance in holiness under the constraining influence of the Holy Ghost. This is a work carried on through the whole life, and only ceasing with life. Though as soon as a sinner is in "Christ Jesus, united to Him by faith," he is safe for eternity, and "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," yet so long as God spares him in the world there will be an advance in heavenly things. Wherever there is life, there must be growth. It is so in natural things, and the law is the same in spiritual things. So soon as the seed is quickened in the soil, it grows,—grows by night and by day,—and at length, piercing the hard clod, it shoots its way upward, and emerging into the light of day, drinks in the dews of heaven, and, under the blessed influences of sun and shower, on, and ever on, it rises and gains strength, until, in a few years, it branches out into a tree that flourishes through the warmth of a thousand summers, and defies the storms of a thousand winters. There is the same growth in human life. The infant develops with each successive year, all its faculties opening like the petals of the expanding flower : the prattling child grows into the blooming boy, the boy into ripened manhood, till the feeble babe, that once hung helpless on its mother's bosom, plays his part on the stage of life, commands on the field of war, shakes the senate with his eloquence, or wields

the sceptre of a mighty nation. Now the same law of growth holds good in spiritual things. We are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

We are to "grow up into Christ in all things." We are not always to remain children, but are to grow into the stature of full-grown men. And, depend upon it, if there be no advance on the road to heaven, no further attainments in grace, we may safely conclude that there is no true spiritual life. There are many stages in our progress to glory. There is the "babe in Christ," and there are "young men in Christ," and there are "fathers in Christ;" but in every stage there is growth; there is a gradual increase in those spiritual graces which are thus named by St Paul as "the fruits of the Spirit"—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" and just so far as our course is an onward one and an upward one, just so far are we carrying out "the will of God, which is our Sanctification."

We are to make efforts to "grow in grace." While all our hopes of progress, and all our spiritual strength, depend on the promised aids of the Holy Spirit, nothing that the Spirit does supersedes our own efforts. It is a most idle fancy, and ensnaring to many, that because we are dependent on the Spirit for all spiritual life, therefore we need not trouble ourselves with efforts

34 THE WILL OF GOD OUR SANCTIFICATION.

of our own. But, brethren, if God works in us, we are to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." We are to aim at a daily increase in every holy and Christian habit, resolving to master sin, and to keep a "conscience void of offence both towards God and man." It is to efforts, not to idleness, to diligence, not to supineness, that God calls His people. He bids them "add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." Paul was an illustrious example of diligence in the Christian life. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This is the way in which we must ever be making advancement in the things of God; for in this world we shall never attain to complete sanctification; the old nature will never be entirely dead to sin, and to the last "the flesh will lust against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;" so that it shall still be too true of us, "Ye cannot do the things that ye would." We shall never reach perfection while we are in the body; and if there be any who say that they have attained this sinless condition, they are

condemned out of their own mouth ; for spiritual pride must be at the root of such a self-complacent mood. I had rather have a humble, watchful, self-condemning Christian, than any of those who, boasting in their personal holiness, erect their trophies, and sing their hymns of victory, and count up the days in which they have lived without sin. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart." A Christian's holiness may be measured by his humility. He that lies lowest at the feet of God as a sinner lies highest in His bosom as a saint. The man that was caught into Paradise and into the third heavens, was also the man who called himself at one time "the least of all saints," and at another "the chief of sinners." But though to feel and to bewail our sinfulness is one of the best evidences of grace, and though perfection cannot be our attainment in this life, we should always make it our aim. We should never give way willingly to sin, but wrestle against it, and, through God's strength, endeavour to overcome.

And have we not every encouragement to "follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"? For has not God promised us those heavenly aids, and that heavenly armour, by which we shall rise triumphant over every enemy of our peace? Blessed promise ! The believer is constantly humbled and dissatisfied because of his small attainments in the divine

life, and the little conformity he attains to Christ; and what is to comfort and encourage him under a sense of his unworthiness, and shortcomings, and slow progress in grace, and in likeness to his Divine Master? The promise that "He that has begun a good work in him" will, in spite of all opposition of the flesh within and the world without, "perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The assurance, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth us, and that our Saviour is one who can help us to-day, and give us a present victory over our sins. For our dependence must be on Him. It is He, and He alone, who can quicken our faith, deepen our love, animate our hopes, and reveal to us more and more of the evil of sin; and through His strength it is that we shall continue to advance, and to grow in every Christian grace and perfection. Therefore, while fighting manfully and working diligently, and while watching unto prayer, let us live hopefully on God, and casting away all faint-heartedness, let us rest on the blessed words, "This is the will of God, even your Sanctification."

Here let me pause, and ask, how is it with you? I beseech you to examine your own hearts, and consider your standing before God. Children of God, *you* have been set apart from the world to the service of Christ. *You* through union with Him have received of the Holy Spirit; *you* have been "washed, justified, and sanctified in the

name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Are you living in accordance with this high vocation? are you living unto Him who died for you and rose again? Nay, if you cannot go thus far, can you say that you *wish* to live for Him? that you wish to please Him first, and love Him best? Oh, see to it that your heart is right with God. See to it that at least in purpose, and aim, and desire, you can say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Happy is he that can say so. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes,"—as delightful as marvellous. Such devout feelings afford the most blessed evidence that the soul has been renewed, and that before it lie eternal ages of progress,—changes from "glory unto glory" in the world above; for this God has in store for His own. As the finite can only be satisfied with the Infinite, even with Jehovah Himself,—in heaven there shall stretch before the souls of the ransomed, in knowledge, in love, in true holiness, a field of illimitable progress,—a progress upwards and onwards unto that which they shall be for ever approaching, yet unto which they shall never attain—the throne of God. This shall be the ever-brightening lot of those who, being renewed and purified, shall carry a holy nature to a holy heaven, and be presented "fault-

38 THE WILL OF GOD OUR SANCTIFICATION.

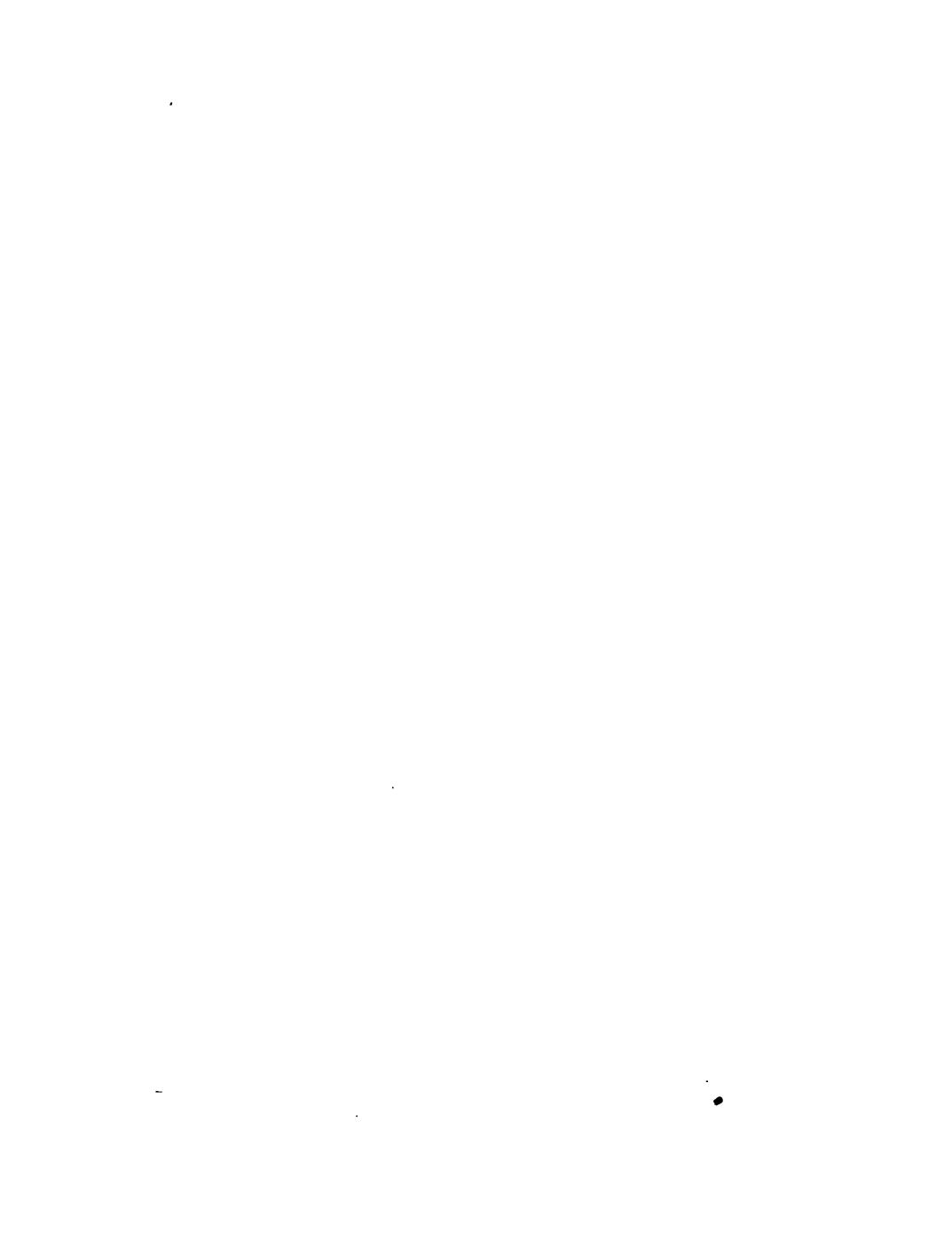
less before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy ; ” the lot of all in whom has been carried out “ the will of God, even our Sanctification.”

Finally, Christian brethren, “ members of His body,” let me ask you to carry away from the whole subject these *two* thoughts. *First*, “ The will ” of your Father in heaven, the end for which your Redeemer came and suffered, was that every one of you might be holy, consecrated to God, serving Him and glorifying Him here, and to serve Him and glorify Him for ever hereafter. For this end you were born; for this “ born again ; ” for this given “ the witness of the Spirit,” and a “ meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.”

The *second* thought is this : “ The man who is Christ’s has a divine life in his soul, and will daily grow in grace ; his advance in holiness manifesting that he is ever reaching heavenwards, —that he is “ led by the Spirit of God,” from grace to grace, and strength to strength, his “ path shining more and more unto the perfect day.” May this experience be ours ! May “ the very God of peace sanctify us wholly : and I pray God our whole soul, and body, and spirit, be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ ! ”

III.

*THE BELIEVER RECKONING HIMSELF
DEAD TO SIN.*



III.

THE BELIEVER RECKONING HIMSELF DEAD TO SIN.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,
but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—ROMANS
vi. 11.

THIS chapter contains passages as great in interest, if not greater, than any in the Epistles. Here are given us the links which unite justification with sanctification. Here we are taught how the righteousness which is imputed to us by faith leads to the righteousness which is manifested in spiritual obedience. On no subject is there a greater lack of spiritual discernment than on the manner in which a believer becomes holy,—how he that is justified becomes sanctified. To understand the apostle’s argument in this chapter, we must trace the whole drift of his reasoning on the great subject of God’s grace, as manifested in the atoning death of Christ for His people. In reading the Bible, we are too apt to forget that the division of chapters and verses is entirely arbitrary and

artificial, and for the convenience of the reader, and that, as originally written, the continuity of Scripture was unbroken. Many overlook this, and so it has come to pass that they make a real separation between chapter and chapter, so much so indeed, that some speak of "the wilderness of the seventh chapter," of "the unhappy seventh chapter" of this epistle to the Romans, and of "the happy eighth," forgetting that we ought to read one of these letters to the Churches as we read the letter of an ordinary friend, not in fragments, but as an entire whole, through which runs the drift of one prevailing conception. St Paul carries on from the beginning of this Epistle to the Church at Rome an unbroken chain of the closest argument, and is setting forth one of the fullest expositions of Christian doctrine to be found in the New Testament. He has proved all men to be under condemnation because of sin, and has brought in the whole world guilty before God. He has shown that there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and that therefore all are under a doom, and a penalty from which there is no escape by the deeds of the law. "Sin reigns unto death;" the fruit of sin in time and in eternity, is death. How, then, can any one be saved? for have we not all "done what we ought not to have done, and left undone what we ought to have done"? Though we have

not been great sinners, though there are degrees of guilt, yet is not the law so sacred that one offence, one breach of any of its commandments, exposes us to the curse of the law as certainly as a thousand? The apostle James says, " Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." How, then, can we be saved consistently with the truth and righteousness of God?

St Paul tells us, in the 21st verse of the 5th chapter, " Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ by His death bore the punishment that we should have borne. He by His obedience won a righteousness, the reckoning and the reward of which are transferred to us ; and we by accepting eternal life as " the gift of God through Jesus Christ," are saved freely, fully, and for ever. So that we may well echo those beautiful words of the apostle, which fall with the very cadence of music on the ear, " Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." But to this some may say, " What, then, shall we do more of this sin, that we may share more of this grace ? " And the apostle, thrilling as it were with the thought of the divine mercy, gives his most clear and emphatic negative to such a question : " God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin, continue any longer therein ? " How shall we, that are dead in law—dead in respect of that sure condemnation which,

but for Christ, would have passed upon us all, and from which we are only preserved through Christ's death, which has restored us again to life—how shall we continue in sin, after an escape has been thus made good for us by Him who died in our stead? “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death?” As the baptized person, in descending under the waters of baptism, resigned the old life, and in the act of ascending from them emerged into a new life, so we, representatively, in the death of Jesus Christ underwent this kind of baptism, even immersion under the surface of the ground at His burial, whence we emerged with Him again at His resurrection. “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.” As we share in His death, so shall we also share in His resurrection. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

The believer is reckoned with, just as if in his own person he had sustained the agonies of crucifixion, and undergone an adequate punishment for that guilt for which Christ rendered an adequate expiation. And all this with a further object,

that in him "the body of sin might at length be altogether destroyed," and that henceforth, from the moment of his becoming a believer, "he might not serve sin." "For he that is dead is freed from sin." The death we are counted to have suffered in Christ as the punishment for sin, and which relieves us from all further charge because of sin, secures our escape from that tyrant beyond whose penalties we are now entirely placed. "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him; knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him; for in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." And now follows my text. It is an inference from all that goes before. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I have dwelt purposely at some length on the argument of the apostle, that you may grasp his meaning, and be in a position to enter into the truth that underlies this verse. Let us now search into the meaning of St Paul when he calls upon us who believe to "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." What are we to understand by the words, "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin"? Probably some here to-day are not very clear as to what answer they would give; for

there is much misconception on this point on the part of many who “profess and call themselves Christians.” They do not comprehend the great privilege and blessedness contained in this and in other passages for a believer, when he is declared to “have died with Christ unto sin, that he might live with Christ unto God.” Some regard the expression as affirming a total insensibility to sin, that they are to “reckon” that sin has no power or strength within them ; that they are to account that they have reached a condition in which they are personally dead to the desires and motions of sin in the flesh. And this causes them much trouble and anxiety, and makes them go mourning all the day long. And the reason is plain : They do not feel that they are insensible to the habits and tendencies of sin ; they know the corruption of their own hearts ; they are painfully alive to the evil that is within. How can they reckon that to be true which they know to be false ? How can they cherish the belief of a thing that is not ? How can they possibly think of themselves that they are crucified unto the love of sin, and that all their living desires are towards God ? Their experience is that of St Paul, who, enlightened by the Spirit of God, saw the exceeding sinfulness of his own heart, and, with a quick sensibility, detected the secret workings of evil in his inner man ; and who made this confession of shame, and humiliation, and regret : “I know that in me, that is, in

my flesh, dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not ; for the good that I would, I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do." And this is the experience of every Christian, and will be his experience to the end of his life. "The flesh will still lust against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh." His confession will ever be, "There is no health in me." His prayer will be, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" And not till the body is broken up at death, and the earthly tabernacle, in which is the leprosy of sin, taken down, shall he be delivered from the struggle between the two natures, and be translated from "the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And now the question comes back to us for an answer, What does the apostle mean when he says, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"? The verse must be read with the preceding one. "For in that He died, He died unto sin once ; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." As Jesus died to sin, so, the apostle says, we are to "reckon ourselves dead to sin." How did Jesus die to sin ? He did not die to sin in its motions and temptations, in its corruption and in its lust, because

He was never alive to sin in this sense. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," "the Lamb of God, without blemish, and without spot." He was sinless among the sinful, pure amid pollutions ; a faultless man, in whose holy breast temptation never kindled a wish, or thought, or fancy, that might not be laid bare to the eyes both of God and man. He Himself explains the wonder : "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." He therefore could not die to the sin that He never felt. How, then, did He die to sin ? He died to its guilt and to its penalty on the cross ? He bore our sin in His own body on the tree, and thus made an end of its curse and punishment, and "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." And we are to "reckon ourselves dead with Him" on the cross to the guilt and penalty of sin, for through the crucifixion of our Surety sin has been cancelled and made an end of for ever. And so now we reach the apostle's meaning. It is not that you are to "reckon yourselves" as already pure, but it is that you "reckon" yourselves already pardoned. It is not that you are to "reckon yourselves dead" to the power of temptation, but that you "reckon yourselves dead" to the penalties of the law. And this assurance, which is the way to peace, and joy, and reconciliation, is the way of reaching to the new life of the holy and sanctified man. Justification is the first step towards sanctification.

The knowledge that the guilt of our past transgressions is done away, that the ransom of iniquity is paid, that in consequence of a death, the pains of which we never felt, the penalties of the law we so oft have broken shall never reach us, is the road that leads towards that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." It is our acceptance in Christ,—our standing in Him,—that has a sanctifying influence on the character, and which by the power of God's Spirit is the instrument in our sanctification. And never will the sinner know what it is to be freed from the dominion of sin ; never will he know what it is to taste of spiritual joys, or to breathe with delight a spiritual atmosphere, till, buried in Christ's death, and raised in Christ's righteousness, he can walk before God with the confident assurance of one who is pardoned, accepted, and saved. Therefore, for the sake of your own peace, and for the sake of your own holiness, obey that precept which comes to you with all the authority of a command from God, and "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As the believer died with Christ unto sin, its guilt and penalty, on the cross, so now he lives with Him in His resurrection life, having passed with Him out of the grave, and he rejoices in the

favour and loving-kindness of God. Our privilege is to count of ourselves that in Christ our curse has been borne, our debt paid, our condemnation discharged; and not only so—this is far from being all—but that in Christ, risen again from the dead, we are able to “rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed.” What a salvation is that which Christ has brought nigh to all that trust in Him! Not alone do we escape the curse attached to sin, but we obtain the blessing promised to obedience; not alone is the gate of hell closed against us, but the gate of heaven is opened for our admission; not alone are we delivered from death, but we are assured of resurrection: “We are alive unto God.” We live through the righteousness of Christ in that “favour which is better than life,” the consciousness of which keeps us peaceful and happy here, and which often, even amongst the trials of our earthly pilgrimage, brightens into such a gleam of heavenly joy, that it gives us foretaste of the coming bliss, when, on our entrance into the immediate and unclouded presence of God, we shall share with our Redeemer in the enjoyment of the divine glory, and the full possession of the divine love.

And, brethren, this truth has, and is intended to have, a sanctifying influence upon the soul. It is because we are thus dead to sin, in its guilt and curse and punishment, and alive to God, sharing His favour, that we are not to allow sin

to "reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof." That sanctifying power, which no real believer can withstand, is gratitude to Him who, by His mysterious passion, His tears and cries and anguish unutterable, His agonies in the garden, His sufferings on the cross, wrought out for ever so mighty a deliverance from death and hell. That which leads us on to holiness is the fire of love in our heart, kindled by that love which burnt so unquenchably in the heart of Christ, and which sustained Him under the burden of a world's atonement. It is the strong persuasion that now we are not our own, but the purchased and redeemed property of another. This moves, and moves irresistibly, the man who rightly appreciates all the horrors of that everlasting death from which we have been saved, and all the sufferings of that dreadful atonement which Christ had to endure. And "he thus judges, that as Christ died for all, then were all dead; and He died that they who live might live no longer to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again."

You see, then, how the doctrine of the text is a means towards our sanctification. We are not to read it, as many do, as a command to "reckon ourselves" personally dead to sin; for that is bidding us "reckon" that to be true which we know to be false; that is bidding us "reckon ourselves" holy in order that we may become holy.

It were a strange remedy for curing a man of his sickness to bid him reckon of himself that he is in perfect health. I confess I do not understand the efficacy and influence of such a remedy at all. I do not see how, by the simple act of reckoning myself to be what I know well I am not, that I am to be placed beyond the gulf which separates me from that which I am from that which I desire to be. But let me "reckon" myself free from condemnation through the death of Christ, and fully pardoned and accepted through His resurrection, and this will be the first step to a new life of obedience, and I shall be bound for ever by "the cords of a man and the bands of love" to Him who died that I might live, and whose "will is my sanctification." The faith of the gospel has a regenerating power. Justification carries with it a sanctifying influence. It is the knowledge of my forgiveness in Christ that is the instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit for making me a new creature, for transforming me from the sinner that I am into the saint that I desire to be. It is through the cross of Christ, in which I glory, that I am "crucified unto the world, and the world unto me." How can sin be anything else than exceedingly sinful in my eyes when I reflect that it nailed my Saviour to the cross and laid Him in the grave? How can holiness be anything else than desirable when I remember how dear

it is to Him who came down from God, and allowed all the vials of the Almighty's wrath to be poured on His head, that " He might deliver us from all iniquity, and redeem us unto Himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works"? O brethren! the door to holiness is through forgiveness, the gate to sanctification is through the dying love of Jesus. Have you passed through this door, entered through this gate? If not, you are still unsanctified, because still unsaved, and yet you may have longings to be other than you are, and you may be putting forth all natural efforts to be so. But in vain! all in vain! You may have laboured long after the life of God and of heaven in the soul, but you have not reached it. You may have struggled, and prayed, and have wrestled with temptation, but you have failed, and the old sins have still conquered, and you are just where you were in the spiritual race. The whole weary work has to be begun over afresh, you have to go through the same fruitless and hopeless battle, and again and again have to confess, with shame and despondency, that you have lost ground instead of gaining it, that you have been vanquished by the sin which you know is working death.

" Oh, the regret, the struggle, and the failing !
Oh, the days desolate, and useless years !
Vows in the night, so fierce and unavailing !
Stings of my shame and passion of my tears ! "

And why is this? You are in earnest to be delivered from sin; you long to "cast aside the weight and the sin that doth so easily beset you." What is to be done? Are you to yield to sin? Are you to give up the struggle, and to live on contentedly in the misery of your present bondage? Are you to abandon faith in God and trust in Jesus Christ, and to go down to that dreadful world where sin shall have its perfect work, and be finished in the horrors of the death that never dies? No, my brethren! God be thanked, there is no need for this. You have been labouring in the wrong track; you have been wearing yourself to no purpose. "Behold I show unto you a more excellent way." Receive into your heart of hearts that doctrine which is as much the power of God unto sanctification here as unto salvation hereafter, and know, from this time forward, that the way of reaching the holiness that you aspire after is to accept a full salvation through faith in the Son of God—is to "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And there follows from all this the great truth that salvation is of grace, and not at all of works. The doctrine I have been preaching to you cuts up legalism by the roots. The law bids us work for life, saying, "Do this and live." The gospel bids us work from life; you are alive, therefore serve. When you set forth on the path

of holiness under law, you do it to attain a life that you have not. When you set forth on the path of holiness under grace, you do it in the power of a life that you already have. Which is the way of this chapter is perfectly obvious. You are not here called upon to enter the service of God as those who have life to win, but to enter the service of God as those who are already alive, as those who can count upon heaven as their own, and who, with a sense of God's loving favour in their hearts, and the prospect of glory in their eye, can walk along a road which, though it be narrow and straight, " shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And this is the spirit of conquest; success crowns faith and perseverance. To the end we shall have a hard fight of it. Enemies will beset our path down to life's last hours, and, as in some sieges, the hardest fighting may be in the breach; for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;" but through God's grace we shall win our way on to victory, and at length be "made more than conquerors through Him that loved us." "He that hath begun a good work in us will carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus;" and in that day, robed in the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, the saints shall appear in His presence, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

One word more. The doctrine of the text con-

tains in it the very germ of sanctification, because it makes the life of heaven to begin on earth. The doctrine is this : That we who believe are invested with a deathless life, because we are raised up together with Christ, and "made to sit together in heavenly places in Him ;" that we are virtually in the very presence and kingdom of God ; that "our life is now hidden with Christ in God," so that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." If this be the case, how can we stoop to live the low life of sin, and worldliness, and earthliness, or live unmindful of our heavenly heritage, seeing that we are bound in everlasting unity with the Spirit of Christ, and are sharers in the immortality of God? How, rather, must not the life of heaven deepen and brighten around us, and "our affections be set on things above," as we reflect that we are not only invited, but commanded, to "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord "?

IV.

*THE SINLESS AIM, AND THE
PROVISION FOR FAILURE.*

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THE SINLESS AIM, AND THE PROVISION FOR FAILURE.

" My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : and He is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

THROUGHOUT this beautiful epistle the beloved disciple is addressing those who were one with him in a common faith. It is his desire that they should be sharers with him in the knowledge of God, and in the full enjoyment of every holy privilege. " That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ ; " and " These things write we unto you that your joy may be full." He then delivers the message with which he is entrusted. " God is light," he says, " and in Him is no darkness at all." Therefore " if we say that we have fellowship with Him, and yet walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth :

but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." For though "our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son, and though we walk in the light," sin is still in the child of God, and the flesh ever lusteth against the spirit which dwells in the renewed man. The child of God can at no time say he has not sinned. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Though we have in a judicial sense died with Christ, the old man having been crucified with Him, and though we have by faith assented to this when we came to the cross, and realised the judgment of God upon our sinful self there, yet morally the old man with his affections and lusts lives still. And these affections and lusts, although they are not allowed to break out into open acts of guilt, have the nature of sin. But God has made provision to meet our sins. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we open our heart to God, if we spread out our case before Him, concealing nothing, palliating nothing; if we tell Him of all our indwelling corruption, as well as of all failures and shortcomings, then we shall find Him "faithful and just;" not indulgent merely, but "faithful and just" to forgive us our sins, and to "cleanse us" through and through

from all unrighteousness. But if, in the face of such gracious dealing with us on the part of God, we shrink back from all open and guileless confession, refusing to trust God, and doing violence to our own conscience; "if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." And then follows the tender appeal which opens the second chapter, and forms my text, in which the apostle beseeches them not to misunderstand him, as if he meant to sanction their continuing in sin. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Let us, in the first place, look at the command, or, shall I call it, the solemn exhortation, which is given to all who have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

Brethren in Christ Jesus, see your high calling of God. Perfect sinlessness is to be your aim, absolute holiness is to be your standard. You are to prove yourselves to be the sons of God by being "blameless and harmless, and without rebuke in the world;" and "as He that called you is holy, so are ye to be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness." The very object which Christ had in view in our redemption was our complete

sanctification, body, soul, and spirit; our separation from all that would cause spot or stain on the conscience, not only from the outward evil word or act, but also from the thoughts and from the purposes of sin. "For the grace of Gód, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Brethren, in these words is stated the thought that was in our Lord's heart when He left the bosom of God, and came down to earth; when He became incarnate, and suffered, and agonised, and died in anguish and blood upon the cross. He would "save His people from their sins." He would conform them to His own pure and perfect image, and, by the grace and strength that He would impart to them, He would enable them to "put off the old man, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." He would be their Saviour, not only from the guilt of sin, but also from its power. Brethren, it is a sinless model which is presented to us; a sinless ideal after which we are to strive. Do you acknowledge your obligation to be conformed to the one and to

reach the other? or do you acknowledge it with some reserve and qualification? Do you limit the measure of conformity that may be expected of you by the infirmity of your frail and fallen nature? Do you make a resolute and determined purpose not to sin? or do you acquiesce too easily in the thought that, however you may try, you cannot expect to be without sin? Take, for instance, some particular fault of temper or natural disposition, some known besetting infirmity; do you enter into a really honest determination to cast it aside, to subdue and overcome it? or do you yield, with a sigh perhaps, to what you consider an inevitable necessity, and reconcile yourself to what you deem to be unavoidable? And are you thus virtually trying to ascertain, not how nearly perfection may be reached, but how far you may safely stop short of it? Brethren, be honest with yourselves. Surely your acquiescence in sin, your compromise with some indwelling corruption, your calculation as to what allowance may be made for a besetting sin, is not worthy of one who professes to be walking in the light as God is in the light, and to "have fellowship with the Father and with the Son." Wilful indulgence in any sin is incompatible with "abiding in Christ" and being "born of God;" for whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of

God." The duty of every Christian man, of every one who feels that sin is "exceeding sinful," and holiness above all things desirable, is to purpose in good faith that he will not offend—is to rise to the high and holy determination not to sin. And to animate us to this is the very object which the apostle has in writing on this subject. All that he tells us of "the Word of Life," of "the life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;" all that he tells of the divine fellowship, and of the nature of Him with whom our fellowship is to be, and of the provision made for our daily and hourly restoration, through "the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin,"—all is intended to give force and emphasis to the exhortation that "we sin not,"—that in will and purpose we are to be bent on not sinning.

And in this endeavour to "purify ourselves even as Christ is pure," and "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, to perfect holiness in the fear of God," we must proceed upon the anticipation, not of failure, but of success; and we must assume it to be possible not to live in the commission of sin if we abide in Christ, and walk in open fellowship with God. Of course, there will be effort required for this—war against evil, the subjection of the body, the captivity of the will to Christ, the crucifixion of the flesh with its affections and lusts, the resolution to give no place to the devil either in thought, word, or deed.

And therefore the commands, "Stand in awe, and sin not," are joined as cause and effect; for the way "not to sin" is just to "stand in awe,"—never to feel too secure, never to underrate the difficulty of a duty, never to sleep at our post, never to grow careless, and never to despise the power of our enemies. And this is just what Scripture teaches in these words, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation;" "Watch;" "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;" "Put on the whole armour of God." If we do these things, fighting with good heart, not desperately, as if we were leading a forlorn hope, but rather as grasping the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, "we shall never fall," and we shall find it no such impossible thing as we might imagine "not to sin." For with a growing clearness of vision, becoming more and more alive to the inexpressible beauties of holiness, and the hatefulness and heinousness of sin, our path shall be the ascending path of heavenliness and spirituality; it shall be "the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Brethren—and I appeal to you who are weary of sinning, weary of finding it always so possible, so easy to sin, to whom it would be heaven not to sin—let us aim at a more sinless and a more perfect walk. I know that it is only when we get to heaven that we shall know what it is not to sin. It is only when we reach that perfect state that we

shall be beyond the possibility of sinning. But even now, in the midst of all evil, beset with temptations from within and from without, we may attain to a holier life than we have yet reached, by "abiding in Christ," and having His seed abiding in us, as "those who are born of God." Let us set it before us as a settled and deliberate purpose, in the strength of God, not merely that we are to sin as little as we can, but that we are not to sin at all. And let us pray for grace that we may be able to act upon that earnest appeal to our purest ambition, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

Let us now look at the provision which God has made to meet our sins. "If any man sin," or, rather, if any of you that are children sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Is there anything in this truth to encourage us in sin? Is there anything in it to embolden us in a heedless walk, presuming on the advocacy of our great High Priest? Shall I, as a child of God, sin lightly because I am easily restored? Perish the ungrateful, ungenerous thought! Shall I dare to turn my Saviour's gracious advocacy into a plea for indulgence? Shall I make it the purchase of immunity? Nay; the goodness and grace of God in providing such

an Advocate will make sin in my eyes “ exceeding sinful ; ” will make me fear to offend, and produce a strenuous effort after a closer walk with my Father in heaven. Shall I continue in sin that grace may abound ? God forbid ! My sin will lie all the more heavily on my conscience because of my Advocate’s readiness to take up my cause, and because of my Father’s willingness to forgive. The goodness of God enhances the aggravation of any sin that I commit, and stamps with a deeper die its “ exceeding sinfulness.” The sins of the child demand more tears, and more poignant searchings of heart, more of godly sorrow and more of bitter weeping, than the sins which he committed when he was in the world, of which he repented, and of which he obtained forgiveness when he left the far-off country for his Father’s house. There is nothing to encourage me to sin ; there is everything to restrain me from sin, as I think how, when I have grieved the Father’s heart, and vexed the Holy Spirit, and pierced the Son, that very Son Himself, “ Jesus Christ the righteous,” has ready the blood and water freshly flowing from the re-opened wounds to wash me anew, and anew present me to the Father, in a “ grace that abounds over my abounding sin.” Can I draw near to that Saviour whom I have been crucifying afresh ? can I touch those hands that I have been nailing again to the accursed tree, or feel them touching me again to bless me, with-

out my whole frame thrilling with the strong resolution never to offend again, as the voice speaks to my heart, "Go and sin no more"? The advocacy of Christ gives no encouragement to sin.

Another lesson from the text is this: Sin is still in the child of God. "If any man sin, he has an Advocate with the Father." He whose mind is most enlightened by the Holy Spirit will most clearly discern and most solemnly judge the sin of his own nature. Like the apostle Paul, who well understood the searching power of divine holiness and truth, he will be constrained to say, "I know that in me," that is, in my flesh, "dwelleth no good thing." He knows but too well that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," and that these are contrary the one to the other, so that he cannot "do the things that he would." "The Word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,"—that Word convinces him of sin, and shows him that it is no mere inert principle, but an active law in his members, ceaselessly warring against the law of his renewed mind. And experience will confirm this; and in the struggle and agony of the conflict with his fallen nature, with the motions of his sinful

flesh, with the desires of the natural heart, he will have often to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The cry may be followed by the shout, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord;" but the cry will be wrung, nevertheless, out of the very depths of his heart, as he feels that every holy affection is opposed by the unholy affections of his nature, and that every desire to do good is opposed by the conflicting will of the flesh. And, brethren, when we talk of sin, let us not judge ourselves by merely overt acts of transgression; for the very conception of evil, though it does not ripen into actual iniquity, has the nature of sin; and oh! what sinful thoughts, and selfish desires, and unholy suggestions, spring up within us unbidden; and how the affections that, true as the needle to the pole, should point steadily to heaven, shift about with every shifting wind! Then how many sins of omission there are—duties unfulfilled, services unperformed, things left undone that ought to have been done, words unspoken that ought to have been said; and all, when placed in the light of divine holiness, sufficient to condemn! And then our sins of "negligence and ignorance," how many they are! There may be workings of evil in us of which we are unconscious, motions and actings of the flesh which we pass over undiscovered. Surely it becomes us to confess with St Paul, "Though I

know nothing by myself," that is, against myself, "yet am I not hereby justified, but He that judgeth me is the Lord." The apostle was conscious to himself of no unfaithfulness in motive or action in the discharge of his stewardship, yet he knew that those eyes which were as a flame of fire could pierce through all the hidden things of darkness, and detect sin where he himself saw none. There may be no indulgence in known sins, no evil-speaking, no wrong-doing, and yet the motions of sin in the flesh, the failure in perfect love to God, the coming short of true love to man, our jealousies, and envyings, and indolence, the little progress that we make in the divine life, our mingled motives, our holding back from spending in the Lord's service, or from being spent in it, has the very nature of sin, and is sufficient for our condemnation. No wonder, then, that we are often cast down and disheartened; and, indeed, we should altogether despair, and throw away both sword and shield in the battle against our spiritual foes, were we not sustained by hope in God's grace and mercy, and had we not this most blessed assurance, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

God has made provision to meet the sins of His children. "We have a great High Priest,

who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” This great High Priest is “Jesus Christ.” “Jesus!” there is music in the name. It is as “ointment poured forth,” fragrant and precious. He is called “Jesus because He saves His people from their sins.” And this Jesus, my Saviour—mine—pleads for me; and when, in spite of my firmest purpose not to sin, in spite of my prayers and struggles against sin, I am compelled still, under the pressure of some besetting sin, to cry out, “Unclean! unclean!” He is my Advocate with the Father; and if so, then I can turn to my soul, and say, in the midst of much discouragement, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?” Go, on assured of victory. Hold on, walking in the light. “Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

And this “Advocate” is “Christ,” “the Anointed,”—“anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power,”—sent and sealed by the Father for all works and offices of rich redeeming love. He is the true Mediator and Reconciler,—“the righteous One,” whose advocacy with the Father is not merely a pathetic appeal to pity, but founded on the principles of equity and truth; so that in our pardon the Father is not simply merciful and gracious, but “faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” He is not only our Advocate with God as

the Judge, but with God as "the Father," whose children we are through the Spirit of adoption. As our "Elder Brother," Jesus Christ the righteous brings us into the presence of "His Father and our Father, of His God and our God," and restores us to a walk of perfect light and love; for He is "the Propitiation for our sins." He died on the altar for our sins, and He has baptized the mercy-seat with His blood; and now "He ever lives to make intercession for us." In the upper courts of heaven, He is girded still, as He was in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, for the service of His disciples; still does He "wash their feet" from the defilement which they contract in their daily walk through the world. Hence, when we are conscious of any evil, of any failure, we are exhorted to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hence, also, in any time when sin has been busy with us, and we are overwhelmed with shame and confusion of face, we are exhorted to "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, seeing that we have access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." We cannot overestimate the privilege of having such an Advocate as Christ—one patient and pitiful, one who listens to our faintest cry, who neither reproaches nor upbraids, and who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," because He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Let us,

then, when wounded and cast down by the enemy, look to Him in whom we shall ever find “a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God ;” let us daily live by faith on Him who has made a propitiation for our sins, and who puts away sin from the sight of God, and from the consciences of His people.

And, brothers in Christ, when you are so unhappy as to sin, come at once to the Advocate, and let nothing estrange you from the Father. Do not add unbelief to sin ; do not aggravate disobedience by distrust of the Father’s love. Bring your sin to be confessed and judged in the light of the Father’s presence, at that mercy-seat to which we can draw near through the blood of Jesus. Then its evil will be seen ; then the preciousness of the all-cleansing blood will be fully realised ; and then, when the freeness and fulness of God’s pardoning love is felt, your self-abhorrence and repentance will be complete. Whatever, then, be the greatness of your guilt, however deep the consciousness of your own unworthiness, however overwhelming the sense of vileness and shame, shun not your Father’s presence ; take your place before His holy eye, and confess to Him all you know and feel yourself to be ; tell Him how “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.” Tell Him this without reserve or guile, and leave yourself in His gracious

hands, in reliance on His infinite mercy, through the blood of His dear Son.

Brethren, again and again would I warn you against estrangement from God. Confession is essential to pardon and to peace. The rankling wound, the festering sore, can be healed in no other way. Hidden sin will cause ceaseless disquietude and unrest. “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” It is this that has often made earth a hell for the ungodly. The knowledge of some secret crime, mingling with the dread of its discovery, has eaten like a gnawing cancer into the heart, has consumed the spirit with the burning fever of remorse, until the tortured conscience has driven the guilty wretch to seek refuge in the grave. Now the horror caused by the remembrance of some fearful crime, the remorse that preys upon the heart conscious of concealed guilt, give us some slight conception of the dreadful sufferings of lost souls. The ceaseless working of evil within, the ever-present corroding sense of guilt, no God into whose merciful ear to pour the tale of woe, no Advocate to plead for the removal of the evil, no “blood of sprinkling” to allay the anguish of the soul;—this is hell! Over the portals of that terrible prison-house the words

might be written in letters of fire, "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." My fellow-sinners, you little know what you are laying up in store for yourselves against the "day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." You little think that the seed which you are daily sowing will grow up into a harvest of bitterness and wrath. We, who have felt "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and the unspeakable blessedness of forgiveness, may call upon you urgently and earnestly to come to Jesus, that you may escape the anguish of ever realising the horror of guilt cleaving to you for ever, and of never knowing, never hoping for, a moment of relief. There "the worm" of remorse "dieth not;" there "the fire" of unalleviated guilt is "never quenched." But I preach to all this day of a Saviour from sin. "Whoso confesseth his sins shall find mercy." Christ Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." That wide charter takes all in. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Come, let us all to the mercy-seat. There is a waiting God, a pleading Advocate, a striving Spirit. To you, believers in Christ, to you who are "walking in the light," and for whom my

sermon is especially intended, to you I repeat the affectionate address of the loving Master to His loving disciples : " My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

V.

*THE HOLINESS NECESSARY FOR THE
VISION OF GOD.*



V.

THE HOLINESS NECESSARY FOR THE
VISION OF GOD.

“Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”
HEBREWS xii. 14.

THE whole verse runs thus:—“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

No subject can be of greater importance than that of “holiness.” “Without” it, we are expressly told, “no man shall see the Lord.” Amongst the doctrines of grace it holds a most important place. Indeed, sanctification is given in the gospel as prominent a position as justification; for if there is no salvation without pardon and acceptance, neither is there any salvation without purity of heart and renewal of mind. It must ever be remembered that Christ came into the world, and suffered, and died, to “save His people from their sins.” Were the sinner forgiven, and did his heart remain unchanged, the doors of heaven would be shut against him; because “there

shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Before we enter the presence of God we must be renewed as well as pardoned, and be given a meetness for the holy employments and enjoyments of "the inheritance of the saints in light." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." He may bear His name; but that is absolutely worth nothing, unless with His name he has received his nature, and is conformed to the image of One who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,"—"the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot."

The subject before us is, therefore, most important; and bears equally on every one of us, no matter what be our rank or office, our profession or position. It is a subject which, from its nature, must engage much of the thoughts of Christian men; and it is of the most solemn moment that we should have sound and scriptural views upon it, and that we should understand it in its different aspects and bearings on our daily life.

Let us, in the first place, inquire what this "holiness" is, "without which no man shall see the Lord."

"Holiness" is essentially a state of the soul. It is not a round of external performances, but a principle which has its seat in the heart. I

should describe "holiness" as conformity to the mind of God. God is the Holy One. Before His absolute and essential purity the seraphim veil their faces as they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." God in His Three Persons is holy. The Father is "the Holy Father." Christ was "the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot," "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." The Spirit is emphatically "the Holy Spirit." So that to have conformity to the mind of God, loving what He loves, hating what He hates, delighting in His law, rejoicing in His will, even when it thwarts our own, this is holiness. It is an internal principle, an inward life communicated from above. It is the loyal devotion of the soul to God. It is a heart "renewed after the image of Him who created us in righteousness and true holiness." It is "godliness," or likeness to God—likeness to Him who has said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Now this definition at once separates "holiness" by a wide line of demarcation from much that passes current in the world as holiness. Thus "holiness" is something beyond morality; it has to do with an altogether higher sphere. Do not misunderstand me, or imagine that I am saying a word against the moral virtues. These are, and these ought to be, highly esteemed amongst men. The man who is pure, honourable, high-minded,

just, and truthful, wins and holds the respect of his fellows. "He has his reward." Integrity is rewarded by confidence, truthfulness is honoured by trust; kindness, and generosity, and benevolence win the heart, and take captive the affections. We cannot help admiring every noble deed, no matter by whom performed; every brave and generous action, every labour of devotion to the cause of suffering, every endeavour to heal the sorrows or supply the wants of mankind. But these human virtues,—lingering echoes of Eden,—flowers that have survived Paradise,—are something different from the holiness required of the Christian. The holy man is always a moral man; but the converse is not necessarily true, that the moral man is always a holy man. Morality springs from natural principles; holiness has its origin in divine grace. It is of heaven rather than of earth; it is of God rather than of man.

"*Holiness*" does not lie in the observance of religious forms. If it did, who had been so holy as the Scribes and Pharisees of old? "They fasted twice in the week; they gave tithes of all they possessed;" "making long prayers, and broadening their phylacteries," they would not eat with unwashen hands, and were strict observers of each point of their elaborate and burdensome ritual. And yet, with so much that was outwardly fair, they were actually farther from the kingdom of God than the harlots and the publicans, just

because they rested with a complacent self-righteousness in the letter of the law, and reduced religion to a mere matter of mint and anise and cummin. But "holiness" does not lie in anything external to the soul; for there is such a thing as "the form of godliness without the power;" and the mere surface duties of religion may be performed by any,—by the dead in sins as well as by those who are alive unto God. Men are ever apt to confound letter and spirit, form and substance; to elevate the outward means into the place of the inward principle, to which all the outward is but subordinate and subsidiary. But "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." So that the observance of religious forms and ceremonies must not be mistaken for that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

Nor is the "will-worship" of asceticism Holiness. There is no holiness in self-imposed duties, or in a rigorous and austere life, which makes self-denial and self-mortification an end in themselves, and does violence to all the natural affections of the heart. There is no real holiness in devising duties that lie outside the circle of those that come to us through the providence of God; nor does the calling to saintship demand the saying of prayers by count, or the practice of meditation measured by the hour-glass, or the

laceration of the flesh to the injury of the health, or a separation from the duties of life, in the retirement of the cloister, or the seclusion of the cell. There is no holiness in the performance of works to which God has not called us—works to which an extra-meritoriousness has been attached by the Church of Rome; for these bear the same relation to real godliness as the jewel of paste, with its false brilliancy, bears to the true and precious diamond from the mine. “Bodily exercise,” bodily gymnastics—the religion which the body can practise on natural principles—the religion of self-imposed duty and denial, “profiteth nothing; but godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of the life that is to come.” Asceticism is not holiness. “Holiness,”—I return to my original definition,—“holiness” is conformity to the mind of God; and without this likeness to the Holy One,—without this assimilation to His character,—“no man shall see the Lord.”

I observe that while “holiness” has its seat in the heart, it will influence the life, and be manifested in the whole conduct and character. Like the leaven that the woman hid in three measures of meal, in the very heart of the lump, it works from within outwards, from the centre to the circumference, and by fermenting the entire mass it gradually assimilates the whole to its own nature. If the tree is made good, the fruit will be good. “Do

men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.” The new birth is followed by the new life ; and when the soul is transformed into the image of God, the entire aim of a believer is to rule and regulate his conduct after the will and law of Him who has “translated him from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son.” The holy man, delivered from the power of sin, filled with heavenly desires, animated by godly resolutions, longing after perfect purity, and thirsting after a deeper devotedness to God, “runs” with enlarged heart “the way of all His commandments,” and “abounds in all those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.” The Holy Spirit, who dwells in him, daily leads him to “crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts,”—to deny himself, and to follow the blessed steps of Him who pleased not Himself, and whose meat it was to do His Father’s will. The Holy Spirit helps the holy man’s infirmities in prayer, and makes intercession within him, with groanings which cannot be uttered. The Holy Spirit “works in him both to will and to do,”—strengthens him in his conflict with the world, and the flesh, and the devil, and enables him to lay aside every weight, and every easily besetting sin, and to run with patience the race that is set before him, and to look unto Jesus for comfort and encouragement and grace. So that

when a man is renewed in the spirit of his mind, the new heart is followed by new habits; the change within is succeeded by a change without; and the whole life is coloured and brightened and beautified by the gracious influences of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

"*Holiness*" is *progressive*. Sanctification in this differs from justification. Justification is an act in the mind of God, and is complete at once and for ever; through it the sinner is pardoned, and accepted, and received back into the divine favour. Sanctification is a work of God on the mind of man, whereby he is regenerated and "made a new creature in Christ Jesus." And sanctification is progressive; it is not perfect at once. It is reached by a ladder rather than by a leap; it must be "*followed after*." There is a "*growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*." Faith strengthens, love deepens, hope brightens, knowledge increases, as the Christian pursues the divine life, and endeavours to walk in the steps of the Captain of his salvation. All the imagery of Scripture represents progress in holiness. The different stages of the new life of God in the soul of a believer are compared to infancy, to manhood, and to the maturity of fatherhood in Christ. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the begin-

ning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.” Let me bring to your recollection the three figures used in a former sermon, and all of which are borrowed from Scripture, to enforce the Christian growth. I spoke then of the babe that hangs helpless on its mother’s arm, without the power to speak or walk, unable to protect self, and entirely dependent on the care of others, developing year by year, the infant maturing into the child, the child growing into the man, until, with faculties and affections ripened and strengthened, he moves the world by his genius and by his power. I brought before you the figure of the seed dropped into the soil, which at first sends up a green and delicate shoot, that an early frost might easily nip, or a tiny insect destroy; but which in process of time, from a tender sapling grows into a giant tree, that defies the rudest storms, and in whose branches the fowls of heaven lodge. I now add to these the scriptural and beautiful image of the opening day, when the first grey line in the east that precedes the dawn deepens into the rosy tints of morning, and by degrees brightens into the full splendour of the noon, and hill and valley and sea are flooded with golden light. Just so “the path of the just man is as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.”

And if the figures of Scripture which describe

the believer's character all testify to progress, so does the experience of God's people as recorded in the Scriptures. Take the example of the apostle Paul, who "delighted in the law after the inward man;" who "counted what things were gain to him loss for Christ;" who had "suffered the loss of all things that he might win Christ;" and who nevertheless, with his high attainments in grace, makes the confession, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after"—this was his deliberate attitude—"if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." And not content with this expression of his feelings, he adds, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What a description of progress is here! Here we see a man with unflagging limb and unfailing heart, with every muscle on the strain and every sinew on the stretch, pressing forward; who thinks that nothing is done so long as anything remains to be done; and who has his eye ever fastened on the goal. "Forward!" is ever the Christian's motto; "forward" is the instinct of the renewed heart; all its movements and tendencies are towards perfection, or towards the attainment of higher Christian graces and a holier

Christian walk. Progress is very real if it be very gradual; for “we all, beholding with open face as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed”—or are being changed—“into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” And, brethren, though all our hopes of progress in sanctification depend on the promised aids of the Holy Spirit, we are to use efforts to grow in grace, and to increase in every Christian habit; and “laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us,” and “coveting earnestly the best gifts,” we are to “watch unto prayer,” and to “give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.” There is to be nothing of indolence or supineness in our attitude or walk; for we are not automatons in the hand of God, but, with soul-thirstings after God, and after a deeper devotedness to His service, we are ever to be “following after that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.”

The Holiness of the Christian is in this life imperfect. Whatever be the spiritual progress of a believer, he never reaches a point where progress ceases. Perfection is not attained in this world,—I make bold to say, cannot be attained here; for “there is no man that liveth and sinneth not,” and “in many things we all offend.” How, indeed, can perfection be reached in this life, seeing we carry about with us a body of sin and death, and that though the spirit is renewed, the flesh still remains flesh, and will

remain flesh till we "shuffle off this mortal coil," and get rid of this "muddy vesture of decay"? The regenerated soul is lodged in a body of humiliation; and just so long as we dwell in a house tainted with the leprosy of sin, so long as we have bodily passions, and appetites, and desires, just so long shall we be compassed with infirmity; so long shall "the flesh lust against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," and our confession must be that "we cannot do the things that we would." "To will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good, we find not." With the mind we serve the law of God, but the flesh would fain bring us into captivity to the law of sin. And so comes the conflict, the anguish of the terrible struggle; for if "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, the Spirit likewise lusteth against the flesh," and will not let it conquer, but "keeps the body under, and brings it into subjection," and overcomes it. And the renewed soul, having learned to hate sin and to recoil from it, and feeling pained and humbled even at the necessity of a struggle at all, cries out in its sore agony, when pressed by the evil within or the evil without, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And even when there is not this fierce struggle with indwelling sin, yet the Christian, when he looks at the holy standard set before him in God's Word, when he looks at the

perfect example of the man Christ Jesus, and knows that after this model he is to walk, that to this pure and spotless character he is to endeavour to reach, feels humbled, and smiting on his breast, echoes the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" For though he aims to be like Christ; though he desires to walk in His steps, though he seeks to abstain from all appearance of evil, yet he is conscious that sinningles with his holiest services, that even in his most sacred and solemn moments his thoughts wander, his affections are cold, and the Spirit of God is grieved. Then, what impatience of temper, what deadness of heart, what dulness of affection, what things left undone that ought to have been done, and things left unsaid that ought to have been said; and while to the outward eye all appears correct and blameless, what secret faults are there, known only to the conscience and to God! So far from considering himself as perfect, he is ready to say with Bishop Beveridge, that "his repentance needs to be repented of, and his tears to be washed in the blood of the Lamb." Yet all this time, conscious as he is of many imperfections, he may be growing more holy and more heavenly; and even though he does not see it himself, and is often cast down because he makes no more rapid progress in the divine life, yet he may in reality be more and more conformed to the mind of Christ, and be growing up into

the likeness and image of God. Others may see the advance which he cannot see himself. It may be with him as with Moses when he came down from the mount; the light of God shining on his face, invisible to his own eyes, may be visible to all around. Therefore be not discouraged. The imperfection against which you strive, and of which you are only too conscious, characterised all the saints of God, even the holiest and best,—the “men of whom the world was not worthy.” Abraham, father of the faithful and friend of God, failed through unbelief. Moses, the meekest of men, spoke unadvisedly with his lips. Job, of whom God Himself said, “There is none like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil,” yet yielded to impatience, and cursed the day of his birth. David, “the man after God’s own heart,” fell into gross and deliberate crime. So with the Saints of the New Testament; not one of them was sinless. Peter, who at Pentecost received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, was influenced by the Judaising party in the Galatian Church, and would have brought the Gentile Christians under bondage to the Mosaic law; and was openly rebuked, and withheld to the face, by Paul. Barnabas, “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost,” was also carried away with their dissimulation, and fell into error for a time.

Paul had so sharp a contention with Barnabas about John Mark, that, Christian men as they were, they departed asunder one from the other, and the unity of their work was broken. The theory of perfection is opposed both to Scripture and to fact, and the taint of the old carnal nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerate. There never has been on earth but one faultless Man, perfect and pure, on whose character rested neither stain nor spot of sin, who in the face of others could throw down the bold challenge as to His outward conduct, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and who, looking inward to the heart, out of which are the issues of life, could declare, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." So that the holiness of the holiest Christian in this life is at the best imperfect, leaving room for further progress to the end; and however he may strive to "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," however he may endeavour to "purify himself, even as Christ is pure," so many infirmities will cleave to him to the last, that not until he leaves the body will his sanctification be complete. Up to the very hour of his death, he will still be busy trimming his lamp, setting his house in order, fighting the good fight of faith, wrestling against temptations from within and from without, and "following after that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Let us look at these latter words—"Without which no man shall see the Lord." The words are solemn, clear, positive, exclusive. For the vision of God there is an absolute necessity of holiness. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." There is, indeed, a sight of Jesus which all shall have, "the small, the great," the living and the dead, the holy and the unholy. "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him,"—the eye that welcomes, and the eye that weeps. Whether you have the faith of Job, who believed and rejoiced, or the faith of devils, who believe and tremble, or the faith of the many, who believe and trifle, yet the words belong to you, "In my flesh shall I see God." When the graves give up their dead, you shall be brought face to face with the Judge.

But there is a vision of the Lord which the holy shall enjoy, and the holy alone. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." To none others is the vision promised. None others could enjoy it. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" The answer given by the Psalmist to his own question is this: "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." The upright walk, the clean hands, and the pure heart, are the needful qualification for heaven; for within the gates of the heavenly city "there shall in no wise enter anything that

defileth." If a sinner did gain an entrance there, he would find himself a stranger in a strange land, shunned by the sainted citizens of the New Jerusalem, out of harmony with their pure pleasures and holy enjoyments, and in the presence of a God whom he hated and feared.

O brethren! what need have we all to have often upon our lips the prayer, "O God, make clean our hearts within us, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from us!"

But the old question may be rising in the heart of some, "What must we do?" You are really longing to be holy; you are yearning to have a good hope that you may see God, and be admitted to the vision of His face, and walk before Him in white for ever. "What must we do?" you ask. Well, the old answer still remains good: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is no other way, and never can be, of becoming holy, but by coming to Him who has the Spirit without measure, to give to all who receive Him by faith. There is no other way of advancing in holiness but by "abiding in Christ," "continuing in His love," and looking unto Him continually for the grace and strength by which we shall be enabled to overcome sin and to serve God.

And, brethren, if you would be holy, believe me, it is your wisdom and your safety not to wait for some more favourable circumstance, or for some

great crisis of the soul; but to let the heart go out, here and now, to that Saviour who is "not far from every one of us." This hour, in the secret, silent purpose of the soul, the question of salvation may be settled; here the boundary line crossed which separates you from the kingdom of God. If any one feels that for him this is the one thing needful, let him close with Christ *now*, let him cast himself on the divine love freely manifested in Christ; and for him the new birth will begin, and the new life will naturally follow, and he will be, in very deed, "a new creature in Christ Jesus." And then—ah! what then?—there will be a following after holiness. "The love of Christ will constrain you to live not henceforth unto yourselves, but unto Him which died for you, and rose again." You will "exercise yourselves to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and man." You will war with sin in every form and shape, and do battle with evil in the heart within, and in the world without; and so, "being not conformed to this world, but being transformed in the renewing of your mind, you will prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God."

And so heaven, when it dawns upon you, will be but the natural completion of your life on earth; for its germ being within you already, the bud of grace will develop into the flower of glory—the tender rays of the morning will deepen, and broaden, and expand into the golden splendour of

the perfect day. Then your will and God's will be one ; there will be no conflict between them ; rather the most entire identification ; and thus for you the promises shall be fulfilled : "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty ; they shall behold the land that is very far off." "We shall behold His face in righteousness ; we shall be satisfied, when we awake, with His likeness."



VI.

*SANCTIFICATION THROUGH THE
TRUTH.*



VI.

SANCTIFICATION THROUGH THE TRUTH.

“Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth.”

—JOHN xvii. 17.

THIS is the most solemn chapter in the New Testament. In some respects it stands alone. Here we have the Eternal Son in communion with the Eternal Father. Here we have the great High Priest, the Anointed One, interceding on behalf of His Church before the throne of God. The disciples are permitted to hear the words of the world's Redeemer, as, lifting His eyes to heaven, He prays for Himself and for His people, and offers all that should believe in His name in one grand act of consecration unto God. It is the solemn night before His crucifixion ; and “calling things that are not as though they were,” He speaks as if the death were already endured, and claims, in virtue of His atoning sufferings, the salvation of the people purchased with His precious blood. For His intercession embraces not only the apostles then standing by, but all who

through their word should believe on His name, and who were given to Him in the “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” And for what did He pray? Their union with Him and with the Father. “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou has sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

Oh, what a revelation of the final purposes of God in the salvation of His chosen do these words open before the mind! Fellowship with the Father and with the Son, union and communion in a love divine, and the vision of the eternal glory! The love of the Father to the Son fulfilled in His people, and they glorified for ever in heaven, and brought as near to the “light which no man can approach unto” as creatures may approach their God!

But I pass from these thoughts to the subject which lies more immediately before us,—“Sancti-

fication through the Truth." "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." In these words we have *the object* of the Saviour's great sacerdotal prayer,—"Our Sanctification;" and we have also *the instrument* by which the sanctification of the elect is accomplished, "The Truth"—"Thy word is truth."

We have examined on former occasions the idea that is contained in the term "Sanctification." "To sanctify" is to set apart that which has hitherto belonged to common uses to the exclusive service of God. The primary thought in the word "Sanctification" is; "separation." It is applied in the Bible both to things and persons, with this difference, that where things are set apart to the service of God, the consecration is external in its character; where persons are set apart, the consecration is mainly internal. It is in this latter meaning of the word that Christ is said to have "sanctified Himself;" that is, separated Himself by His own free will to the work of redemption, surrendering Himself to the conditions which were necessary for the reconciliation of the world to God. It is in the light of this idea that we are to interpret these words of His in the 19th verse: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." "I consecrate myself, my will, my powers, my whole being, to the work which the Father has given me to do,

that my people may be consecrated by their own free will to God through ‘the Truth.’”

The life of the Son was one long act of self-consecration, self-resignation, and submission to the will of God, and “pleasing not Himself,” nor “seeking His own glory,” but “learning obedience by the things which He suffered,” He at last crowned His voluntary sanctification by pouring forth His soul as a sacrifice unto God upon the accursed tree.

We see, then, what Sanctification is—separation—the consecration of the will and of the life unto God. I observe again, that the prayer, “Sanctify them,” leads the thoughts to the Great Agent in the sanctification of the Church. We cannot sanctify ourselves any more than we can justify ourselves. It is the gift of the Father of our spirits. Nature can do nothing for us here. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Divine grace is alone equal to the work of raising us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is God who “has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,” who carries out His eternal purpose by the sanctifying agency of the Holy Ghost. Father, Son, and Spirit are all engaged in the great work of the believer’s consecration; for we read in the opening of St Peter’s First Epistle, that the saints are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,

through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." When St Paul, in the 10th chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, introduces Christ as saying, " Lo ! I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of me), to do Thy will, O God ; " he adds, " By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The redemption wrought out by Christ is made the basis in this verse of our Sanctification. Again, we read in the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that " Jesus, that He might sanctify His people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." And the prayer of St Paul on behalf of the Thessalonian Church is this : " And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Sanctification of the elect is, as we are thus plainly taught by Scripture, both in its outward separation and in its internal consecration, the work of the Three Persons in the Trinity. And let us always bear in mind that, in its highest meaning, it is a transformation of life, flowing from a transformation of character. Beginning in and with the heart, it gradually transforms the conduct, and brings the thoughts, and words, and actions " into captivity, to the obedience of Christ." It is not merely outward separation to God at baptism and confirmation, or by some external

form of profession, it is separation from sin to God. Nor this alone, for this is merely its negative side : it is the pursuit of holiness,—the cultivation of “ whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report.” Thus Sanctification, in its completest sense, is, through the Spirit’s constraining power, an outward and visible consecration of the whole man to God’s service, which flows from an inner self-consecration in love of the heart to God’s will.

And Sanctification becomes ours only through the gift of that Divine Spirit who draws away our love from self and fixes the affections on God ; who changes our darkness into light, and turns our blindness into sight, and purifies the heart, and gives us the same mind that was in Him who was “ holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners ; who did no sin, and in whose mouth was found no guile.” The Spirit, indeed, employs means for the attainment of this end ; and the means that He blesses above all others is, “ that Word ” which He has magnified above all His name, and which the Saviour, in this sacerdotal prayer, emphatically designates “ the Truth.” For, interceding on behalf of His people, and asking for them this greatest of all gifts, He prays, as in the text, “ Sanctify them through Thy truth ; Thy word is truth !”

Let us now look at the instrument in the believer’s sanctification, “ the Truth.”

Sanctification can only be through the truth. It is "by the incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, that we are born again." It is by "the sincere milk of the Word that we grow." Men may give us rules and directions by which we are to become holy ; they may point to this means, or recommend that method, of attaining to holiness ; they may endeavour to smooth the path which leads to conformity to Christ ; but if their statements are not based upon the Word of God, they will deceive and lead astray. There is much false teaching abroad on the way of becoming personally holy which needs to be guarded against and repelled ; for falsehood can only pervert, and mislead, and destroy. "The Truth" is God's instrument in the sanctification of His people. Cleave to the Truth. Let the Word be "a lamp to your feet, and a light to your path."

By "Thy Truth," or "Thy Word," the Saviour means the revelation of God's will in the Bible, wherein is made known to us the Divine nature, and the Divine dealings with man. The Bible contains those facts and doctrines which are a direct revelation from God, and which have a profound bearing on the salvation of men. "The Truth" which is made known to us in the Scriptures is to be received in faith, without doubt or dispute, because it comes to us on the authority of Him who cannot lie. It is widely sundered

from all other classes of knowledge, in that it has for its grand subject—touching other matters only as they bear upon this—God's eternal purpose in “bringing many sons unto glory,” from the wreck and ruin of the Fall. It is not the only truth. “God fulfils Himself in many ways.” All fact, whether belonging to the region of science, or history, or philosophy, is God's truth, and, as such, has a great moral value, adding to the treasures of the human mind, enriching and invigorating the intellect, and giving man a power over the subtle and secret forces of nature. But though all truth, of whatever kind, is of God, all truth does not sanctify; because, though it exercises the understanding and acts upon the intellect, it does not move the affections or influence the heart. There is nothing in the study of the stars—nothing in the knowledge of the strata of the earth—nothing in an acquaintance with the anatomy of the human frame, to make a man holy, to overcome his love of sin, or to make him “a partaker of the divine nature.” The result of an acquaintance with the works of God is more intellectual than moral; it gives force and elevation to the mind, but leaves the heart entirely unaffected; and while it acts upon the understanding, it fails to bring the man into loving subjection to God. But divine truth, the revelation of God, as manifested in His Son—this goes beyond the intellect—this reaches the heart—this touches all the affec-

tions ; and this sanctifies ; it has a transforming power over the character, and makes a man "a new creature in Christ Jesus." And because there is a real connection between the believing reception of divine truth, and a walk in newness of life, our blessed Lord offered the prayer on behalf of all who should believe in His name, " Sanctify them through Thy truth ; Thy Word is truth."

Let us now see how "the Truth" sanctifies. And, first, *it sanctifies because it proclaims the pardoning love of God.* "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is this revelation of the grace of God that restores man to holiness. It is this that is the means of his recovery from sin. And in what way? Because love produces love. "We love Him because He first loved us." Man can defy fear, he can stand out against the terrors of the law. Man sinned under the very shadow of Mount Sinai itself—sinned ere the thunder had well ceased to echo and the lightning to flash ; and the only argument which can melt, move, transform, and regenerate his nature, is the love of God in Christ. This is the rod wherewith to smite rocky hearts, and draw forth a stream of healing tears. This is the mighty power to awaken faith, to secure obedience, and to bind men with loving cords to the service of God for ever. For

only think what God has done for us, and say whether the great love wherewith He loved us must not act upon us with a most powerful, sanctifying influence? We were outcasts from the presence of God, estranged from Him, "aliens," as the apostle says, "from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." And yet, far off as we were, we "were made nigh by the blood of Christ." "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable in His sight." The death of the Incarnate Son is the measure of the love of God. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." And it is this manifestation of pardoning love, moving in harmony with the most perfect justice, that, reaching the seat of the disease, heals it, and, taking the heart captive, restores it to God. When we feel that all has been given, the least that we can do is to give all. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" is the response of the heart to mercy so unmerited and

undeserved. If you would find the sanctifying power which, in the successive ages of the Church, has helped men and women to lead holy lives, to "walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith they were called," you will find it in the believing reception of the eternal truth that the Son of God took flesh, and died out of love for them on the cross. "The love of Christ constraineth us to live no longer unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and who rose again." "Sanctify" is the cry of hearts that are touched by the divine love—"Sanctify us by Thy truth; Thy word is truth."

Again, the truth sanctifies by setting before us the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the great ideal of holiness. We have more than a set of doctrines inculcating holiness, and more than a series of precepts urging to holiness; we have One who has clothed Himself in our flesh and blood, and who has Himself walked the path He calls us to tread, and who says, as He beckons us onward, "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you." Our Pattern, as well as our Propitiation, Christ has left His footprints on the road by which we are to travel onward to the kingdom of heaven. He has given us a human manifestation of the divine perfections, and shown us the meaning of the command—which otherwise would have been beyond us, far above out of our sight, too abstract to be grasped by our finite minds—"Be ye holy,

for I am holy." In Christ we see "the image of the invisible God," "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." And " beholding," as St Paul did, "with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus looking unto Jesus, and seeing the beauties of His character—its goodness, its excellence, its truth—we long to be like that on which we gaze, and longing, aim at it, and aiming at it, are gradually transformed into His likeness. And no lower standard is ours, no less perfect ideal; not the purest and best of men, for they all had their imperfections and infirmities, which separated them by an infinite distance from "the Lamb without blemish and without spot." We follow St Paul only so far as he followed Christ, and setting before us the highest standard of excellence, we seek to attain unto "the measure of that stature" to which we were predestinated from the beginning to be conformed, even "the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ." Seeing in Jesus the incarnation of sinless purity, we desire to be as He was, and asking earnestly for the Spirit of God, whose office it is to "take of the things of Christ, and show them" to the soul, we claim a part in the Saviour's prayer,—"Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth."

But again, "*the Truth sanctifies*" by giving

us an object of hope. We have many a promise of perfection to be attained hereafter. And all these promises are intended to have a sanctifying influence—"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." It is through "the exceeding great and precious promises" of the Word that we are "made partakers of the divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." "We are saved by hope." Faith not only worketh by love, but "by hope; "and every one that hath this hope"—of being like Christ at His appearing—"purifieth himself even as He is pure." It was the hope of obtaining "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" that kept St Paul in the attitude of one who was ever pressing toward the mark. Though we cannot wholly "attain" now, or ever say here that we are "already perfect," yet there is another life—a glorious world lying beyond the gate of death, where the holiness, which at present is only in its germ, shall bloom into the flower of an unfading beauty and strength. "When Christ who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory." Without this promise of attaining the ideal which we pursue, we should often be disposed to grow weary of the race, and give it up in despair. But "though faint, yet pursuing," is our motto. We do not

grow weary in well-doing, because we know that “in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Hope, which, even though it be a forlorn hope, inspires courage into the soldier, and lights his way to victory; hope, which sustains the sailor on the long and dreary night-watch at sea; hope, which nerves the workman’s arm in toil, as he thinks of those depending on his labour for bread, and which soothes the most wretched in their misery; hope, in spiritual things, is both a prelude to success, and a means to ensure it. The child of God, with Christ in his heart and heaven in his eye, girds up the loins of his mind, trims his lamp; gathers up his strength for the battle; daily mortifies some sin, and, seeking to bring every thought captive to Christ, grows in knowledge and in love and in humility, and ever increases more and more. Thus, going on from strength to strength, and filled with a passionate longing after a holy walk, he at length “appears before His God, perfect in Zion.” Yes, “perfect,” for “when we see Him as He is, we shall be like Him;” “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory,” and “awaking from the sleep of death, we shall be satisfied with His likeness.” And when we are “presented perfect before Him, without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing,” but “faultless,”—the prayer shall be fulfilled, “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.”

Brethren, this connection between "the truth" and self-dedication to God, which is the essence of Sanctification, is a matter of Christian experience. Every true believer knows this in a greater or less degree. He knows that if he receives "the truth" in the love of it, and in sincerity; that if he is not "holding the truth in unrighteousness," it does really mould and influence the character of his whole life. It supplies him with new motives, new hopes, new fears, new affections, and gives him new principles of action. Faith and obedience are inseparable in the life of the Christian, just as in a web warp and woof are inseparable; and to believe "the truth" with the heart is necessarily to follow after that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

There will indeed be many failures. The very earnestness and depth of our aspirations after holiness will only make us sensible how far short we fall of what we desire to be; we shall painfully feel that "we cannot do the things that we would," and that "when we would do good, evil is present with us." Thus, the holier we grow, the more humble we shall become; the greater our advance in Sanctification, the more shall we know of our own sinfulness, our own nothingness; the more shall we realise our corruption, and the more shall we be able to enter into the humbling confession of St Paul, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is

good I find not." For whatever liberty may be ours in Christ, however we may rejoice in knowing that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death ;" yet our low attainments in grace, when compared with the high standard which is set before us, will fill us with shame and sorrow, and lay us down in the dust at the feet of God, and often constrain us to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" Still let us take courage. There is no ground for despair. "This is the will of God, even your Sanctification." Believe this. We have many enemies within the camp, many enemies without ; the world, the flesh, and the devil, are always active, always ready to betray us into sin ; but "He that is for us is greater than all that are against us ;" and in the strength of God we shall overcome, however fiercely the battle may rage. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Renewed by His Spirit, and sanctified by His grace, all who are Christ's shall at length attain to His pure and spotless likeness ; for perfection and conformity to the mind of Christ are secured in the covenant sealed with His blood, and are also guaranteed in the prayer, "I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me." Be not therefore discouraged if the battle sometimes seems to go against you. Grow not weary of the race if you are sometimes dis-

heartened because you make no more rapid or sensible progress. Say with the strong faith and undaunted courage of David, " Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." Let God be your hope, Christ your stay, the Spirit your helper, and perfection your object. " He aims too low that aims beneath the skies." Let your aims run in harmony with the Saviour's prayer, " Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth."

Lastly, Never make your infirmity an excuse for sin. Never think lightly of any fall or any failure in service. Never lose the practical in the ideal, or neglect the simple, plain duties that lie around you, for some exalted conception of a life above the conditions of sense and time, and spent wholly in spiritual communion with God. How practical is St Paul in his exhortations to Christian holiness, " Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." " Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearer." " Let all bitterness, and wrath, and envy, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

And again, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." And, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ. And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening : knowing that your Master also is in heaven ; neither is there respect of persons with Him." There is nothing transcendental here. These duties are very commonplace ; yes, but it is this daily life, with its daily duties, that makes the battlefield on which we have to fight the good fight of faith. It is through these simple duties, through the spirit in which they are done, that we are to glorify God. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Therefore I say again, let perfection be your aim ; and let it be your constant resolution to press farther along that path which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And so, "God working in you to will and to do of His good pleasure," you shall "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" your path ever onward and upward, heavenward and Godward," till at length, mounting as on eagle's wings, you reach the gates of glory, and in you the Saviour's prayer is accomplished—"Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth."

VII.

*THE SAINT'S CONFLICT, AND THE
SAINT'S VICTORY.*

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"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—ROM. vii. 24, 25.

To enter into the true meaning of this passage, we must understand its place in the argument which the apostle is conducting. In the preceding chapters of this epistle he has proved that the Jew and the Gentile are both under sin, and therefore under condemnation, that we are justified freely by grace, and that while the wages of sin is death, "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." With these words the sixth chapter ends. In the seventh chapter it is shown that the freeness of God's grace in our deliverance from the law of sin and death, so far from being a motive for continuing in sin, is the strongest argument against sinning. "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto

death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held ; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." St Paul then holds up before us the true value of the law ; and, telling us that it is an expression of the divine holiness, he assures us that "by the law is the knowledge of sin." From the seventh verse to the fourteenth he writes in the past tense, as though describing his condition antecedent to his conversion as an unregenerate man. "I had not known" (or recognised) "sin;" I had not been acquainted with the fact that sin is in me, but by the law, which was the innocent means of calling it forth ; "for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Once he had been alive without the law—not really alive unto God, but he ignorantly thought himself alive ; and he lived on in contented ignorance of his guilty and condemned state in the sight of God. "But when the commandment came," forbidding in its searching severity even the wrong desire, then "sin revived," came to life again, and he died. He was brought under the sentence of death. The law condemned him. The law of God (and that because it was holy, just, and good) wrought death in him—slew him under the curse. "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin"—might be shown to be sin—was permitted to produce these results,

"working death in me by that which is good ; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful,"—that it might be known in all its exceeding sinfulness. The apostle now, from the fourteenth verse, goes on to show one aspect of a believer's condition in this world—"For we know that the law is spiritual ; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not : for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." And at the twenty-first verse—"I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me"—that is, having the tendency to bring me—"into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." And then, in very sorrow and shame that he is so weighed down by his carnal nature, and that his attainments are so far below his desires, his work is so far beneath his will, and his holiness falls so far short of his aims, he is compelled to cry aloud, under a pressing sense of the misery of this condition, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The expression "body of death" may refer to a species of martyrdom to which the early Chris-

tians were exposed for their championship of the truth. It was the custom with their persecutors to chain a dead body to the living man ; and he that was thus bound to the loathsome corpse was compelled to drag it about with him, until life sank beneath this fearful ingenuity of torture. You can imagine the horror with which the living man would regard the dead body to which he was fastened ; and the illustration will help you to realise the feeling with which the apostle regarded that body of sin to which he was bound, and which in its natural workings was opposed to the pure aspirations of the regenerated soul. But even in the midst of his sorrow and distress there was mingled with his cry for deliverance the triumph of promised and assured victory ; and the words of bitter anguish are hardly spoken, when he adds, with a voice thrilling with joy, " I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

There is, as you are aware, a difference of opinion on this verse, and, indeed, on the verses that follow the thirteenth. Some consider them as describing the state of the believer ; others regard them as a description of man in his unregenerate state.

My own opinion is—and I have many of the soundest theologians on my side—that St Paul is here speaking of himself as a converted man. None but the regenerate can say that they " delight in the law of God after the inward man ; "

for "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and against that law of God by which it is condemned. You will remember that David's description of the godly man is this—"His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

But while I regard the conflict in this chapter as that of a believer with sin, I would observe in passing, that the experience here recorded is not the experience of one who *yields* to sin, but the experience of one who, whilst successfully battling with sin in its developments, nevertheless finds that he falls short of the perfectness which he yearns to attain. And moreover, I am far from saying that this seventh chapter of Romans gives the whole aspect of the experience of a believer. It only gives one aspect, and the aspect given in the next chapter is to be conjoined with it; for I believe the glorious freedom of the eighth, and the ceaseless conflict of the seventh, a conflict ending in victory, co-exist together.

Having so far cleared the way, let us now examine the nature of the struggle which is carried on between the two conflicting principles that are to be found in the breast of every man who is "born of the Spirit." Through the operation of the Holy Ghost in the soul, the Christian becomes the possessor of a new and divine life; and thus he has two natures—the old nature, which is part and parcel of himself, and

the new nature, or "new man" as it is called, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Now these are contrary the one to the other. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Hence arises that warfare which is carried on in the inner recesses of the soul—the warfare between nature and grace. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," is the short but graphic description of every one who has been born from above into the kingdom of God. The heart of the Christian becomes a battlefield on which there is carried on an incessant conflict between a nature tainted with evil and a spirit regenerafated and renewed. Nor is this an unwilling struggle on the part of the Christian, for all his interests and desires are on the side of holiness, and opposed to sin; and as the new nature has the habitual predominance, and as he is in very deed "led by the Spirit," he feels that one of the most precious elements of the gospel is its purity. It is just because its truths have a sanctifying power that they are precious to his soul. It might contain balm for his wounds, and comfort for his sorrows; but if it only dried his tears, and did not subdue his corruptions; if it only assuaged his grief, and did not restrain his sins; if it only saved him from their guilt, and did not deliver him from their power, half its value would be lost, half

its preciousness would be gone. To be "in Christ" is to long for conformity with Christ; so that the renewed man, hating sin and loving holiness, rejoices when he reads of God, that "His will is our sanctification." He loves holiness, not for any reward connected with its attainment, but he loves it for itself; and being released from all anxiety about a debt which Christ hath cancelled, and a condemnation which Christ hath done away; and being "delivered from the law, that being dead wherein he was held," he delights to "serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." As the kingdom of God—the kingdom which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"—has been set up within, he belongs in heart to another world, and not to the present; and therefore, setting his affections on things above, he seeks to withdraw them from everything that he knows to be opposed to the will of God. The love of God in Christ Jesus has been made so practical to his heart by the Holy Spirit, that his affections become purified, his tastes refined, and the whole tone of his character is so raised, that he feels sin to be a burden, and, longing to be delivered from it, he sighs for the time when every element of corruption shall be rooted out from this body of humiliation, and it shall become, not the clog of the soul, but an aid to the soul in the service of God. He has no toleration for evil; sin and

failure are his greatest grief, his bitterest sorrow; and as he knows how far short he comes of the perfect standard which is his aim—as he at times, through the craft and assault of the enemy, is betrayed into sin, he finds himself constrained to confess with St Paul, “That which I do I allow not; that which I hate, that I do.” His mind is wholly with the law of God, though the motions of the flesh are with the law of sin. If he could only “do the things that he would,” if he could only “find how to perform that which is good,” he would live the life of heaven on earth, and rise at once to that perfect sanctity which it is his longing to attain. But though this cannot be while he is in the body, yet as all his desires are on the side of holiness, and his strongest aim is to be what he ought, and to do what he ought, his energies are habitually put forth against “the weights and sins” that do most easily beset him. So that he daily “mortifies the deeds of the body,” and “crucifies the flesh,” with its affections and lusts. He is willing ever to “resist unto blood, striving against sin.” The battle is a desperate one. The Christian is no carpet-knight. He knows what it is to “endure hardness;” and because the strife is often keen, a life-and-death battle with the living, active principle of evil within; because he has to struggle with all his might against the sinful tendency which leads to sin, and because he is feelingly alive to

every deviation from the perfect law of God, he is often constrained to cry out in the agony of the conflict, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

We see, then, the nature of the struggle between the old man and the new. For this is not the experience of an unconverted man; nor is it the experience of one who has "fallen from grace," and who, "coming under law in his practical ways," has so got into darkness. It is the experience of Paul the confessor and the apostle, who was "not behind the very chiefest of the apostles" in grace, whose faith and love were strong, whose hope abounded, and whose attainments in holiness were great. Even he so finds the dark shadow of sin coming across his holy "delight in the law of God," that the cry of bitter and agonised anguish is extorted from his lips, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And let me say here, that it is for our own peace that we should know what we are to expect when we become believers. Are we to look for ease and self-indulgence, and a sort of epicurean condition, in which we are always to be "lying down in green pastures, and to be led forth by still waters?" Are we always to be on the Mount, basking in the sunshine, and chanting hymns of victory, "making tabernacles" for ourselves, and never coming down to the toils and struggles and

130. THE SAINT'S CONFLICT AND VICTORY.

conflicts of earth? Not so: not thus are we to be “conformed to the image” of that Master, who was “a man of sorrows,” who was tempted in the wilderness, and who “with strong crying and tears” passed through the hour when “the powers of darkness” assaulted Him in the garden, who was baptized with a baptism of blood, and whose whole life was a conflict with the evil around. And *we have what He had not*, a conflict within: inclinations to evil which He never knew, sinful tendencies to which He was an utter stranger; for “the Prince of this world had nothing in Him,” and in heart and in soul He was absolutely perfect and pure. But whilst we are not to expect a life of ease, and a pathway smoothed to heaven, we may have peace even in the midst of warfare; we may know “the glorious liberty of God’s own children,” and rejoice in hope of an assured deliverance from sin. And this is just that mystery of the Christian life which the world can neither solve nor apprehend, and which even some Christians fail to understand. Men of the world cannot comprehend why the believer should regard himself as a great sinner even while he “rejoices in Christ Jesus, and walks not after the flesh but after the Spirit;” or why he should be so sensible of his deeply-seated corruption, even while he is vigorously striving to “fight the good fight, and to keep the faith.” But just in proportion as he feels the power of grace does he hate the presence

of sin. As he discovers more and more how much God should be loved, the more does he become dissatisfied with himself, for so much the more does his love to God appear deficient in fervour and strength. And on this principle can we explain the seeming difficulty—why St Paul, who “delighted in the law of God after the inward man,” who felt himself “a debtor, not to live after the flesh,” who through the Spirit was mortifying the deeds of the body,” could nevertheless say, “I am carnal, sold under sin ;” for his very hungering after perfect holiness and absolute purity made him hate the presence of a power which was opposed to the workings of the regenerate man. Any condition in which sin is active, even though it is mastered and overcome, is a condition of bondage to the believer who yearns after the stainless perfectness of heaven. The believer is like a man divided against himself. Paul fights against Paul. The battle is not waged between two persons, but between the two natures of one and the same person. If the tendencies of the new nature were fully carried out, they would lead him to all that is high and holy and pure ; they would raise him to a seraph's purity and an angel's love, and lift him at once into the unsullied purity of the upper world. If the tendencies of the old nature were yielded to, they would debase him to all that is earthly and defiling and low ; they would make him a slave to

the corrupt passions and carnal appetites of a body of sin and death. Hence the struggle between the two.

"The body of death" is bound to "the living soul;" and however the Christian may groan under the association, he must bear it about with him until the end, until "the earthly house of this tabernacle is taken down," and earth is rendered back to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes. For though the spirit has already passed through one resurrection—the resurrection from the grave of trespasses and sins,—the flesh remains in its natural condition, unrenewed, and all its infirmities and passions and desires cleave persistently to it still. There is therefore a battle between life and death going on between the old man and the new, and it is only by a perpetual struggle, by ceaseless watchfulness and prayer, that the Christian is able to "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." And oh! how he hates the evil which still lurks in his heart, "the sin which so easily besets him," the incurably corrupt principle which is always present with him when "he would do good;" and how his whole renewed nature rises up in indignation against the weakness of that other self which clogs and hinders it in its endeavour to shake itself free from all that is evil, and that is opposed to the mind of Christ. Never did martyr view with feelings of more utter loathing the dead

body which was chained to his side, and never did he more strenuously endeavour to detach himself from its clasp of corruption, than the Christian views the indwelling sin which is a part of his very being, or than he strives to master what is so opposed to that new principle which has been implanted in his breast by the Holy Ghost. In vain is it that he sees a standard of perfect holiness which to reach were to make his life blessed. The very fact of there being this standard on which his heart is set, but to which he cannot from the very constitution of his nature attain, does but render more distressing the painful sense of his distance from a height towards which he is stretching, but which he is unable to reach. And how long will this state of conflict last? Till death. "There is no discharge from this warfare;" it is a lifelong struggle. Not till "the earthly house of this tabernacle" be taken down will the leprosy of sin be eradicated; not till "the last enemy" be met and vanquished, will there be rest from the warfare; not till then shall we give up the attitude of soldiers who are "fighting a good fight," clothed in the whole armour of God. And as the struggle is that of a lifetime; as sins, though defeated, rise up again and again toadden and weary the soul by their fresh assaults, you cannot wonder that the Christian often "groans, being burdened" with this body of humiliation. Now this indwelling sin, this "thorn" ever rankling in the

flesh, will explain to you the experience of St Paul, and his bitter cry for deliverance. For when the apostle felt what he might be if he were not bound, and held in a lifelong fellowship with a sinful nature, a fellowship which humbled and distressed—I had almost said exasperated—him, he cried out in the agony of the martyr who would free himself from the loathsome corpse, but finds it impossible, “O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”

Thus far, then, we see that even they “ which have the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.”

But I would now have you observe how immediate the change is, from the cry of anguish to the shout of triumph, “ I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord.” This is the hope. We must never separate the cry of misery from the outburst of joy. The sorrow is only for a moment, and is at once lost and absorbed in the gladness of victory. For there is future emancipation. The believer is not one who sighs in a hopeless bondage. His state of durance shall not last for ever. We shall be delivered from this natural body at death, and the corrupt principle which has troubled many a pure and saintly man, even on his death-bed, shall be rooted out and done away. And so “we are saved by hope, and hoping for that we see not, we do with patience wait for it.” And

in the meantime, though the evil nature is only mastered, and not eradicated; kept under control, yet not stript of its power to harass and distress; yet if there be the soreness and the agony of a conflict, there is the joy and the triumph of a conquest also. The battle with the evil nature, with "the desires of the flesh and the mind," may rage fiercely, but the dominion of sin is already destroyed, and the crown is prepared for the victor. Though we carry about with us a body of death, and shall carry it with us to the grave, yet we may have present victory over sin. It is not merely that I look for future deliverance from bondage; there is a present deliverance to-day, not only from the guilt, but also from the tyranny of evil. In Jesus Christ our Lord we have a Saviour who, having freed us by His death from condemnation, does, by His Spirit, impart unto us such real strength as shall nerve us to vanquish sin, and enable us to "yield ourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The Saviour does not merely offer His people victory at death, but He gives them a present victory—saving them from the sins which, hateful to God, are hateful to them also, because they are renewed after the likeness of God. In Christ the apostle found deliverance from the dominion of sin, and He who emancipated St Paul can emancipate every believer from the same hate-

ful tyranny. The believer does not conquer in his own might ; it is only through a living union with our risen Lord, and by the power of His Spirit, that he can resist the devil, and break loose from the world, and overcome the sins which, like crafty and cruel foes, would prevent his entrance to the promised land. Without Christ we can do nothing. Our only security is in keeping near to Him as our everlasting strength, as that Captain of our salvation who, teaching our hands to war and our fingers to fight, leads us on to victory. Not that we are mere helpless automatons in His hand, machines pulled by a wire or moved by a string, and made to act mechanically, like dolls. No ! There were no Christian manhood in this. We are not puppets, but men ; and as men we are to "quit ourselves, and to be strong," to "stand fast," to "wage a good warfare," and, throwing ourselves into the battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, to slay sin, subdue bad propensities, defeat Satan, and win the conquest over self. But while the fight is ours, and the promises are made "to him that overcometh," the armour in which we are to clothe ourselves is the armour of God, and the strength by which we conquer comes from Christ. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Courage, then ! A little child with Christ on his side, and the Spirit in his heart, is mightier than any earthly foe, and mightier than the devil and

all his angels. "He that is with us is greater than all that be against us." "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." True it is that sin is ever present, and the corrupt nature is always ready to be "set on fire of hell" by "the fiery darts of the wicked one;" but then strength is given from above, and we take "the shield of faith," whereby these flaming arrows kindled in the fires of hell are "quenched," and, resisting the devil till he flee, we come out conquerors from the onslaught. And if there should at times be failure and defeat, as there will be, whilst we are in the body, then see the gracious provision—"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And our very falls will make us more humble and more watchful, more on our guard against sin for the future, will bring us to our knees with an earnestness greater than we have known before. And thus, "sorrowing after a godly soul," weeping at the feet of Jesus, and finding forgiveness, we shall there resolve to win back the ground we have lost, and, rising up from our fall, we shall begin again the noble fight, and renew the glorious combat. Remember then, to your comfort, ye that are battling with evil

from within and sin from without, that in spite of all the opposition that comes from a deceitful heart, in spite of all temptations that arise from the flesh, and all solicitations that proceed from the world, Christ has guaranteed you the final victory, and "He that has begun a good work in the soul will carry it on until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ." Let not failures, however frequent, tempt you to despair, heart-breaking, humbling as they may be; but rather let them drive you to "the blood of sprinkling" for fresh cleansing, and to Christ for fresh strength, and thus will you escape those deep pits of bitterness and despair, into which many a poor and weary and desponding soul has sunk. And thus, when in the midst of a humbling and distressing struggle with a sinful and corrupt nature, you are forced to mourn your vile body, and, burdened under a sense of the sore moral leprosy by which it is pervaded, to cry aloud, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" you will be able to add, with a voice of triumph and praise, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

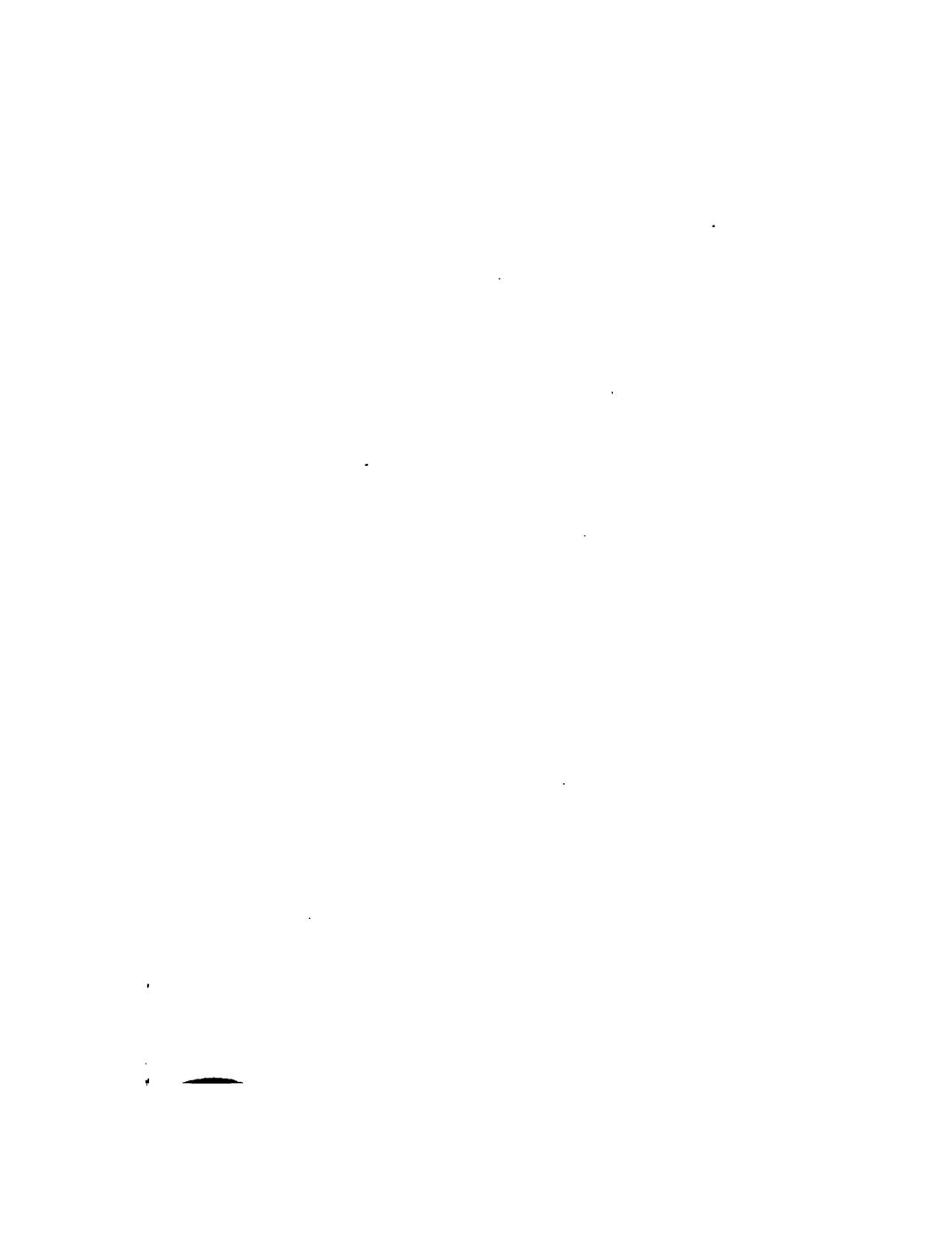
Finally, as I have said, there is a complete deliverance assured to the believer from the present struggle with sin, from the workings of pride and selfishness, and anger and covetousness, from the secret conflict with evil in the inner man. But when? At death—not before. When the body is

laid down in the grave, no more to be resumed in its old form, and under its old conditions, then shall the union between the body of death and the living soul be terminated for ever. For when the body is raised, it shall be raised in honour and glory and incorruption, and, "fashioned like unto the glorified body" of the Son of man, it shall not be a hindrance to the redeemed soul, or a clog upon the spirit, but its help and its handmaid in the service and worship of God. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." Then we shall rest from the conflict. "The whole armour of God" shall be put off for "the white robe," and the sword be exchanged for the palm. Then shall the cry of sorrow be turned into the song of victory, and the shout of the battle be changed into the psalm of praise. Then shall the warrior be crowned by "the Captain of our salvation" Himself, and be welcomed to "the rest that remaineth for the people of God," with the words of welcome, "Well done." Let us then be strong and of good courage; for though we are very far as yet from having come to "the spirits of just men made perfect," very far as yet from the condition of the glorified saints, and though, when struggling at our appointed warfare below, we have often to exclaim in very sorrow and anguish

of heart, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?” yet we can at once follow up the cry with the words of thanksgiving, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

VIII.

*THE SAINT'S GRADUAL TRANS-
FORMATION.*



VIII.

THE SAINT'S GRADUAL TRANS- FORMATION.

" But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. iii. 18.

We have in these beautiful words a summary of gospel blessings. The apostle has been drawing a contrast between the old covenant and the new, between the law and the gospel. He magnifies his apostleship by bringing it into comparison with the office committed to Moses. There must have been, he argues, a great glory about the legal dispensation, for when the tables of the law were given into the hands of the lawgiver, there flashed from his face a brightness which overpowered the children of Israel. He then draws the inference, that if the dispensation itself were glorious, it must have been a glorious thing to have been entrusted with its ministration, and thus he claims for Moses a high honour, because appointed by God to be the giver of the law to men.

But if it were thus honourable to be entrusted with a ministration which after all was a ministration of death, must it not be greatly more honourable to be entrusted with a ministration which was a ministration of the Spirit? If, therefore, glory resulted to Moses from the one ministration, ought not still greater glory result to those who are ministers of the New Testament, "not of the letter which killeth, but of the Spirit which giveth life"? He proceeds to draw the lines of contrast between the old dispensation and the new more sharply still, by bringing into prominence the darkness and bondage of the law as distinguished from the light and liberty of the gospel. He does this by a reference to the veil which Moses put on his face when he came forth from communion with God. Thus the old dispensation was a clouded revelation; it was seen through a veil, its truths were embodied in symbols, and shadowed forth in types and ceremonies, sometimes announced in prophecies, which even the speaker himself did not understand, but never flashing out upon men with the unclouded brightness of God. But the new dispensation is the opposite of all this. All that was dark has been done away. There is now in Christ the full shining out of the divine glory, without any interposing veil or darkening cloud between, and all men may clearly see its splendour, and as they look, may be "changed" into the moral resemblance of that which they behold, "For we

all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Note, first, the object which the gospel so fully reveals to our sight—"the glory of the Lord," "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." "The glory of the Lord,"—is it not this vision that the devout heart has ever longed for? Has not the loving soul yearned for a view of God more palpable than it gets? We can enter into the feelings of Moses when, from the cloudy pillar at the door of the Tabernacle, the Lord talked with him as a man speaketh with his friend, and when, not satisfied with merely hearing the voice of God, he cried with an intense desire, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory." But how can this "glory" be shown? "No man hath seen God at any time," nor can see Him. "He dwelleth in the unapproachable light." Is there no answer to this cry of the yearning heart? There is. We know that God has revealed Himself in a certain measure in His works. "The heavens declare the glory of God." Very partially, however; for while they display His greatness, they reveal to us nothing of the moral character, the attributes and perfections of God. For thousands of years the heavens have been telling the same truths in the same silent yet eloquent language, and

yet who ever learnt from them the mercy and goodness, the wisdom and truth, the holiness and justice of God? Men worshipped the lights of the firmament as gods, and bowed down to sun and moon and all the host of heaven; but they learnt little or nothing from them of the nature and character of the King, "eternal, immortal, invisible." We must look elsewhere for a full revelation of God. And to what shall we look? To a glory that excelleth any that is flashed from sunny skies or starry heavens—the glory that is seen in the Person and character of the "only-begotten of the Father"—"God manifest in flesh." The object which we "with open face behold" is that glory which, as St John tells us, was seen in Him who was the image of the Invisible God—namely, "the glory" which was manifested in the moral beauty of His character and life, in miracles of mercy, in loving words, in deeds of compassion, the glory of perfect obedience to the law, and of perfect submission to the will of God. Jesus Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory." Divine attributes are harmonised in His person; divine perfections are embodied in His work; divine promises are fulfilled in His death; divine hopes are satisfied in His life. In "the only-begotten Son" the Father reveals Himself with a clearness not to be found in any other revelation of His nature. Nowhere else in the universe is there such another display

of the perfections of that Being who is hidden from us in the inaccessible light; to Christ we must turn—to His profound wisdom—His serene purity, His tenderness, His forbearance, His unfailing love—to the combined mercy and majesty of His faultless life, if we would behold in its truest manifestation “the glory of the Lord.”

Look now at the glass which reflects the glory—“We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord;” or, “beholding in a mirror.” What are we to understand by “the glass or mirror” in which the glory is to be seen? The gospel—the new covenant. But is not all the gospel gathered into Christ? And consequently, is not Christ Himself “the glass” in which the glory of God is mirrored? For He reflects, as a glass does, the express image of God. “Show us the Father,” said Philip to our Lord, almost repeating the prayer of Moses many centuries before—“Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” And what was our Lord’s gracious reply? “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” “In me you have a living, visible, perfect image of the unseen God.” “The glory of God” had been but a hidden glory before. Nature had only imperfectly declared it. The law had but partially revealed it, and not until Jesus, by His life and by His death, upheld righteousness and exalted mercy, honoured justice and expressed love, showed God to be “just, and yet the justi-

fier of the ungodly," did that glory appear with a radiance pure and undimmed. "The Father was indeed glorified in the Son." Jesus is "the glass" in which we see the clear shining of the light of God. No man under the old dispensation might look on the face of God and live. He would have been consumed by the insufferable brightness. But that blaze of glory can be borne now, because it comes softened and shaded and tempered in the person of Immanuel—"God with us." We can now draw near to God and not be afraid. We can fall at His feet, and, clasping them, exclaim, "My Lord and my God!" He permits us to lay our weary heads on His bosom, to grasp the hand held out to heal and to bless, to look into the eyes moistened with tears or glistening with divine love, to speak to Him, and pour our sorrows into His ear, and lay our sins at His cross. Oh, what a blessed truth is this! What a truth for our comfort and consolation, that we, sinful, guilty creatures, poor and miserable and wretched, can look into the face of this loving, pitiful, tender Saviour, and feel assured that we behold in Him, clearly mirrored and reflected, "as in a glass the glory of the Lord."

Look now at the Christian's privilege—"with open face." The word rendered by our translation "open," is in the Greek text "unveiled." This at once carries back the thoughts to the preceding verses, where St Paul speaks of the veil that

was on the face of Moses, and upon the hearts of the children of Israel. "We all with unveiled face." The words declare the clearness of vision with which believers are permitted to look into the face of God. The shadows of the law have passed away ; the symbols have given place to the substance ; the types have been fulfilled in the Anti-type ; the altar of atonement, the bleeding sacrifice, the ministering priests, have received their accomplishment in Jesus. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." It is now the high privilege of the Christian to look at "the glory of God," as seen in the face of Jesus Christ, and seen there without an interposing veil between. It is a glory revealed to the eye of faith. What though the eye of sense cannot look through the heavens, and see, like Stephen, "the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God ?" What then ? Does not faith, with its eagle-eye piercing the clouds, see Him there, the source of all life, the centre of all promise, the channel of all blessing, the well-spring of all joy ? Is not faith conscious of His favour ? Does it not lean upon His arm ? Does it not rest in His love, and esteem Him "the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely "? To see by the consciousness of our trusting souls is not less than to see by the vision of our gazing eyes. No veil interposes between my Lord and me when I believe and love. I have then a communion with

Him as immediate and as real as that which comes through sense, an approach to Him as certain as that which is given by sight. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." I know that this is a region of Christian experience into which the natural man cannot enter, and which can be appreciated only by those who are spiritually enlightened. "The peace and joy in believing" is a land unknown to those who have not been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and whose eyes have never been "opened to see the wondrous things written in God's law." But are they less real for this? Is there no glory in the heavens and the earth because the blind cannot see? Is the beauty of nature—are the rosy tints of dawn, the golden splendours of noon-tide, the tranquil loveliness of evening, a mere dream, a fancy, an idea, because to the sealed eye all is one dark and dreary gloom, unbroken by a single ray of light? Is the Christian a mere fond enthusiast, because he sees in Jesus a beauty which other eyes cannot see? Have the things unseen no real existence, because they are hidden from the dull, glazed eye of unbelief? Is it but an imaginary Christ after all that we serve and worship and adore? No! Ten thousand times no! We are not mistaken in our reverence. In our highest moments of faith, in our deepest experience of joy, there is nothing imaginary; all is solid, real, substantial. We are living our truest

life when we "walk by faith." The seen are shadows; the substance is found in the unseen. As we daily look unto Jesus, who became all our salvation that He might become all our desire—as we believe in one whom we never saw, and as we find in Him the true life of the soul, we are walking, not in "sparks of our own kindling," but "in the light," and walking along "a path which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" shineth unto "a day" when the truth of our Lord's words shall be clearly understood—"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Let us look at the Christian's Transfiguration—"We are changed into the same image from glory to glory." The word "changed" is, in the original text, "transfigured." We only find this word four times in the New Testament. Besides using it here, St Paul employs it in the exhortation, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Two of the Evangelists use this same word while describing the Transfiguration on the Holy Mount. And why was this word selected by the inspired writer to express the gradual change of the saint into the likeness of Christ? Surely to make us see the completeness of the transformation which passes over the character of those who, "with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord." As we gaze, we become like that which we behold. The brightness on the face of Moses, when the skin of his face shone, was

neither attractive nor transforming ; it was rather repellent, it struck the children of Israel with dread. The law cannot change the moral character into the likeness of the holiness which it proclaims ; it fills with fear, rather than ministers to peace. But the brightness in the face of Christ is both attractive and transforming ; and, looking at it, we are changed into the likeness of the spiritual beauty that we behold. We are, as it were, the receptive plates, on which, as we stand in the light " beholding," the " Sun of Righteousness " photographs His own image ; yet as the receptive plate is not perfect, we only receive a broken image, a dim outline of the glorious original. But still something of the beauty that we behold is transferred to us, and is stamped upon our souls ; and so we become conformed gradually to the pure and perfect image of Him who was " without sin, and in whose mouth was found no guile."

Is it so *with us*? Are *we* being transformed into the likeness of Christ? Are *our* affections becoming more pure—more spiritual—more heavenly? Are we being " transfigured " as we look? Do we bear His image so plainly, that all men " take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus." Does the light of God so shine upon us, that we become mirrors ourselves to reflect it to the world around? Alas ! which of us does not fall far short of what we ought to be? Who does not feel humbled and self-condemned, when

he thinks how very feebly he represents to the world the bright and resplendent image of Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners"? The face of Moses, when he had been on the Mount with God, shone so that the people could not endure steadfastly to look upon it. Oh that our lives might so shine under the revealing, transforming power of the Spirit, that sin and unbelief would shrink away abashed and ashamed from the holy and resplendent lustre. Let us who profess to be Christ's aim at being more Christ-like; and, not content with a low and unsatisfactory state of spirituality, not satisfied with a faint tracing on the soul of the pure image of Christ, but longing for a perfect transformation, strive to grow in holiness, living more in communion with Christ, abiding with Him, walking with Him humbly, closely, prayerfully, looking to Him daily, and then there shall be transformation by "beholding,"—we shall become like Him, because looking at Him we shall love Him, and love assimilates: and thus shall we be "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

"Are changed from glory to glory." "Are *being* changed." The process is gradual. Sainthood is not attained by a sudden effort. There is a growth in grace. There is progress in holiness. "The path of the just man shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" "he

goes from strength to strength." It was not by two or three hasty, and occasional blows of the hammer that one of those beautiful antique statues, which were the glories of their own age and are the wonder of ours, was wrought into grace and symmetry from the rude block of Parian marble, but by prolonged labour carried on through many days, and thought over through many an anxious night. It was thus that the sculptor's efforts were crowned with success, and that he at length saw in complete realisation the ideal of which he had dreamed. So it is by lifelong efforts, by daily "looking unto Jesus," by beholding with the transforming gaze of love the Christ who died and rose again, and lives for us, that we are gradually but surely moulded into the likeness of His wondrous beauty, who "is fairer than the children of men." Therefore, if sanctification be but slow, let us not be impatient; though slow, it will be sure, if we turn to Christ, and give Him the love of our hearts and the trust of our spirits, for "He that hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," "He will perfect that which concerneth us;" and so at length the intercepting medium of sense shall be swept away, and the soul be laid bare to the ineffable brightness and beauty of God, and "beholding His face in righteousness, we shall be satisfied with His likeness."

"Into the same image." The same as we behold,

—into the blessed likeness of Christ. Into this all true Christian men are growing, however unlike they be in natural character and mental gifts and constitutional peculiarities. Christians differ in temper and disposition, in taste and tone of mind, in gifts and in graces; there is Mr Great-heart, the giant-killer, and hero of a hundred fights; there is Mr Feeble-mind, who started at his own shadow, and trembled at the falling of a leaf. Nor is it to be wished that all good men should be alike. God has room in His service for the fiery Peter and the loving John, for the dauntless Luther and the more gentle Melanthon; and that gracious variety in unity which marks all the works of God, which is seen in the members of one family, and saves it from dull monotony, which gives its beauty to the heavens above, where “one star differeth from another star in glory,” and yet where all shine with the same reflected lustre, is a characteristic of the Christian Church. But different though we be in disposition and character, unlike in the influences that surround us, and in the history of our lives, “we all who are beholding Christ” with the eye of faith, are growing into a perfect man, unto the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ. “We are changed into the same image from glory to glory.”

“We all.” There is now no specially favoured race to whom the vision of God in Christ especially belongs. “There is neither Greek nor Jew, cir-

cumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free ; but Christ is all, and in all." The good, glad news is preached to all ; all may come to God through the one Mediator, and looking up into His face, cry, "Abba, Father!"

Nor is there now any privileged class of men who alone may approach God, and enjoy a nearness to Him from which others are excluded. "The veil has been done away." Nothing intervenes between our Lord and the heart that yearns after direct communion with Him. No fence separates the holy place from the Holy of Holies. All sacerdotal distinction between man and man is for ever abolished. No priest stands between us and the great High Priest of our profession. All have equal "access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." All may "draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." The light from the uplifted face of God may smite direct upon our happy faces ; and not resting there, but reflected back—yea, passing inward into our darkened hearts, may work a transformation into the likeness of God. The blessing is for all. There is not a man amongst us, who, if he but looks to Jesus,—no matter how sinful, or weak, or ignorant he has been,—may not be partaker of the privilege,—who may not be included in the apostle's words, "We all, with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord."

And lastly, let us consider the Agent in this

transformation—"Even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Holy Spirit is the Agent. See how the Trinity is at work in the salvation of the Church. We have the glory of the *Father*, as seen in the mirror—the *Son*, and as shown to us by the Revealer—the *Holy Spirit*. This transformation into the image of God, wrought by the act of "beholding the divine glory, as it is seen in the face of Jesus Christ," is effected by the power of the transforming Spirit, who is the Agent in the gracious change. "He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us." He is the Author of all life and light and love. Let us honour the Holy Ghost, and look to Him for the grace that we need. It surely ought to make us glad, and fill us with hope, to know that we have a Divine Person on our side, who, if we are Christ's, "will work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." It is a weary, heartless work, this striving after goodness by ourselves. How often have we tried, and failed, to make ourselves better, to cure some faults, to overcome the irritability of temper, to curb the angry thought, to bridle the hasty tongue, or to lay aside some weight, and to vanquish some easily-besetting sin. And why? Because all our efforts rested on self, ended with self. Let us try a more excellent way. Throw yourselves on the strength of the Spirit, and on the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." Vows

and pledges, promises and resolutions, apart from the help of Him, "without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy," will never restrain the corruption of your nature, or keep in check the sinful propensities of the heart.

The devil laughs at your strongest resolutions, and snaps them as easily asunder as Samson brake the green withes with which the Philistines bound him, and which were broken "as a thread of tow is broken when it touches the fire." Trust in the Spirit—pray for the Spirit—"Be filled with the Spirit." Pray for larger measures of His illuminating grace; and let the prayer be urgent; for all power and strength and blessing are wrapped up in the gift of the Spirit: all grace and all glory are here. You cannot live without the Spirit; you can only truly live in the Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." All is death within that soul into which He has not come with light and life. And the second death,—what is it but a perpetuation of our natural and ungodly state—eternal darkness within and without—exclusion from the unclouded vision of the goodness that satisfies, and of the glory that never fades? Therefore cry for the Spirit. He is "the free Spirit," "the liberal Spirit," "the Spirit of grace :" as free a gift as Christ is. He that gave His own Son to die for us, will also "give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." And the living

Spirit of God will lead you out of all your darknesses into the region of light, and will set you in the full shining of the Saviour's face, where you shall be transfigured as you look. And as you stand " beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," and receiving on your unveiled face the clear shining of the light of God; and as the glass flashes and quivers with the glory of God in Christ, you, thus " looking unto Jesus," shall be transformed in the act of beholding—" changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

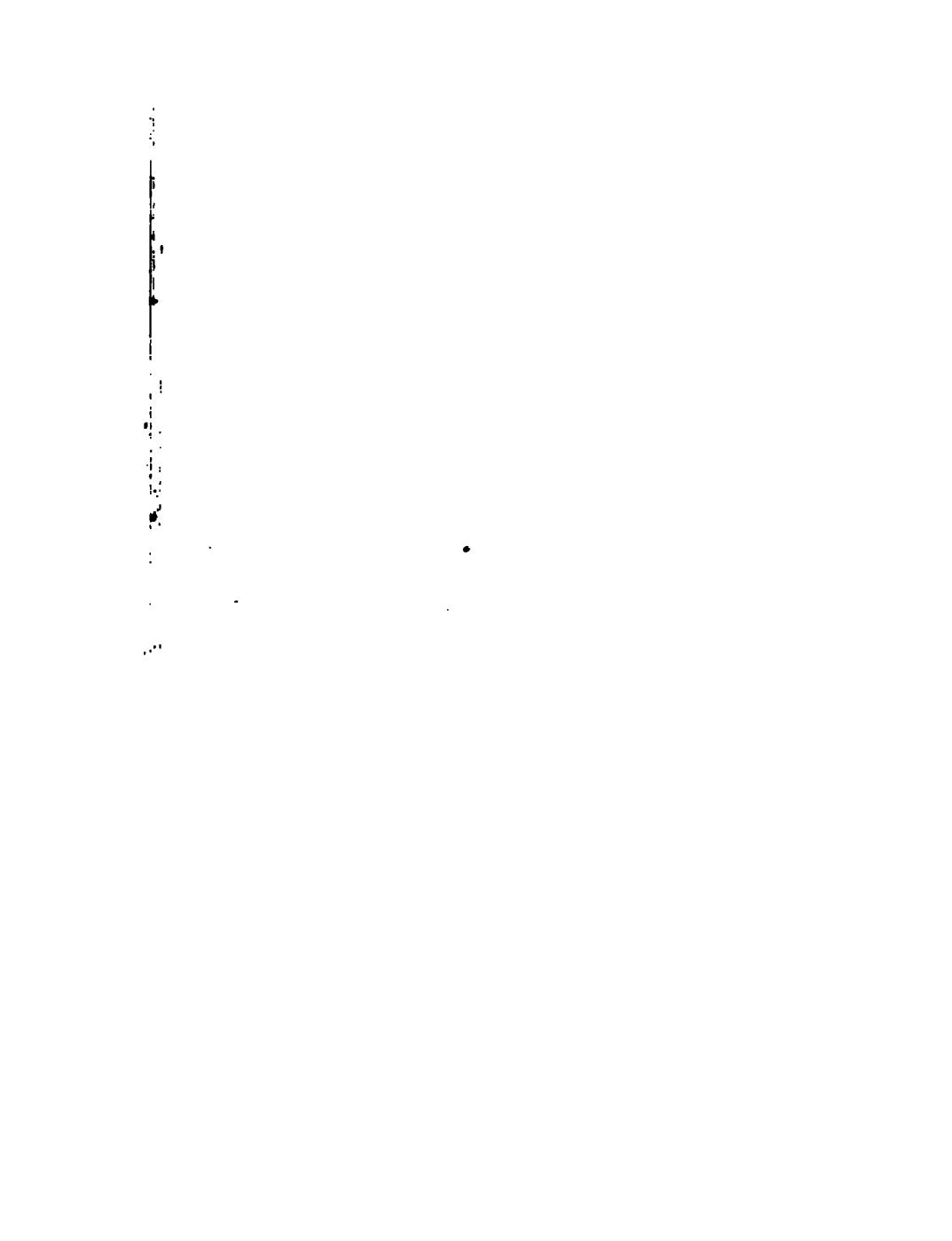
One word more. Transformation into the likeness of Christ is the heart and soul of all true religion. It is the object which God has in our redemption. All things else—doctrines, services, ceremonies, the means of grace—are intended to be aids to this. They are to be prized, and used as *helps* to this great end ; and they are helps towards it just in proportion as they reveal Christ to the eye of faith : if they hide or obscure Him, or if they are used as *ends* in themselves, they become more than worthless, snares to the soul. Let conformity to Christ be the great end that we keep in view in the use of all means of grace of which we take advantage. Yea, let it be the end and object of our lives, and then our path shall be an onward one and an upward one, until at length we, who are made conformable unto the Saviour's death, shall rise in the likeness of His resur-

rection. "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Clothed in the immortal vesture of the Resurrection, we shall pass from the shadows into the perfect light; and with His glory streaming in fullest lustre around us, "we shall see Him as He is." Now we see Him by faith, and beholding, grow like; then we shall "see Him face to face," and the transformation will be perfect. But even then there shall be transformation—there shall be endless progress and growth; our happy souls shall look upon Him for ever, and change as they look. And throughout the ages we shall ever be advancing to further degrees of likeness to God, climbing steeper heights of knowledge and love and joy, making eternal progress towards infinite perfection; and it shall be true there of the children of light—"We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass,"—in Christ there "seen as He is, face to face,"—"the glory of the Lord, are changed (the only change in heaven) into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

IX.

THE SAINT'S LIFE-WORK.

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"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."—JUDE 20, 21.

THESE words form a marked contrast to those which immediately precede them—"Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. Those be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." There had arisen in the Church, even in the early days of its "first love," ungodly men, who "turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

And St Jude reminds those to whom he is writing, that they are not to feel surprised at this. It was nothing more than had been predicted by the apostles of the Saviour. St Paul had foretold this

apostacy, and so had St Peter; they had both spoken of "perilous times to come in the last days," when men should be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Now in this description of the world as it was then, we have a mirror in which we may see reflected the state of the world as it has been ever since, and as it is now. The multitude "know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The mysteries of revelation are doubted or denied, and made the subject of ridicule or contempt. Men walk after the sight of their eyes, and the desire of their hearts. "They separate themselves" from communion with God, and from fellowship with the people of God. They are "sensual"—that is, living a life under the influence of the senses ; servants to the desires of the flesh and of the mind. "They have not the Spirit." They have never been quickened by His renewing grace, have never been lifted up into the supernatural life of faith and hope and love, but continue in their old carnal state of death in trespasses and sins. And so will it be even unto the end—"Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." With an increase in superficial knowledge, and with the pride which it engenders, shall be an increasing spirit of scepticism, which shall hold in contempt the revelation of God in his Word. "There shall come in the last

days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

And amidst the abounding sin and ungodliness of the world at large, wherein lies the safety—nay, what is the solemn duty, may I not rather say, the happy privilege of the believer? "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Look, first, at the tender address of the apostle—"But ye, beloved." To whom is the apostle writing so affectionately? To whom is his epistle inscribed? The opening verse gives us the answer, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called, mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied." Those who are marked out in such strong contrast to the world are those who had been "sanctified" or "set apart" by the Father, who were being "preserved," kept or guarded in Christ Jesus, and who were "called"—effectually called—the word of life being brought home to their hearts with demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. Blessed are all such. God, who has "loved them with an everlasting love," regards

them with perfect approval, because they are united by faith to "His beloved Son, in whom He is always well pleased." They are precious in His sight—His peculiar treasure, the sheep of His pasture, the people of His hand, and His especial care. And they, on their part, find a pleasure in the service of their God. His will is their rule, His word their guide, His law their delight. They shine forth as lights in the world in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; and instead of being "conformed to this world," to its sins, its fashions, or its maxims, "they are transformed by the renewing of their minds," and thus "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Their daily life is a perpetual rebuke to all that is false, or base, or unholy, a constant and consistent testimony to all that is pure and lofty, to all that is "lovely, and of good report." They are "living epistles," exhibiting by a humble and Christ-like mind the beauties of holiness, and showing forth in a manner to be "read and known of all men," the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light."

Is our life, brother, in any measure like to this? Do men, when in contact with us, feel that religion is not the mere theme of the preacher's discourse—a beautiful ideal, which no one ever thinks of realising; but that it enters as a real, influential principle and power into the life of our every day? Do we bring the loftiest spiritual motives to bear

on even the lowliest practical duties? Oh, what is our responsibility, as men who are "called to be Saints"? What our duty as those who are Christ's? Is it not to walk in the light, as He is in the light? Is it not to "let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven"? It was to those whose life was an undimmed mirror, in which was reflected a bright image of the purity and goodness and grace of Christ, that the apostle Jude wrote the beautiful words which are the theme of our contemplation. Placing the "beloved of God" in most marked contrast with "the careless," "the sensual," and "the unspiritual," he appeals to them in the tender and touching and affectionate words, "But, ye beloved."

Let us consider the Saint's life-work in detail. "Building yourselves up on your most holy faith." The Saint is a builder. He builds not with perishable materials, but with materials imperishable and abiding. We know from the other Scriptures that there is but one foundation—"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." But every man is to build thereupon. The Christian is not to rest satisfied with a mere reception of the truths of the Gospel, but he is to endeavour to "grow up unto Christ in all things," "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." What saith the Apostle Peter to the Christians of his day? "Giving all

diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." There is to be a constant "building up" of thoughts, words, and acts, true and loving, strong and pure—a never-ceasing increase in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, for the building cannot be completed in this world. To the last hour of life must we be adding holy thoughts and words and deeds to the structure. Not so long as we are in the flesh shall the headstone be brought forth with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it!

And here I may give the needful caution of the apostle, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." If a man build with "the gold" of faith, with "the silver" of hope, with "the precious stones" of love, his work shall abide, and he shall receive a reward in that day when every man's work shall be tried by fire of what sort it is. But if any one build with the dead "wood" of a lifeless formalism, with the perishable "hay" of a spiritless profession, or with the brittle stubble of worldly habits and superficial opinions, "his work shall be burned, and he shall suffer loss, though he himself,"—because on the foundation,—shall be saved; saved, yet so as by fire." Brethren, let us be careful to build with the right materials. There never was a day in which it was

more necessary, not only to take heed on *what* "foundation" we are building, but with *what* materials we are building thereupon. There are many who profess to give Jesus the honour of salvation, who nevertheless rob the gospel of all its life by overlaying it with a cumbrous ritual and a profitless ceremonial.

Oh, guard against all teaching that would subvert the grand and saving doctrines of Christianity, or throw a doubt upon the inspiration of the Scriptures, or call in question the one finished sacrifice offered up by Christ upon the Cross. "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." I know how the pride of talent, or the desire to be singular, or the appetite for novelty, or reverence for human authority, will cause an unstable mind; a mind "ever learning, and yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," to yield itself to the specious sophistry of false teachers and guides. The enemy is ever on the watch: he can assume even the form of "an angel of light," and adapting himself to the various dispositions and circumstances of those whom he seeks to deceive, even quoting Scripture for his purpose, he often persuades the unwary, rashly confident in their own strength, to fall an easy prey to error, and to "make shipwreck of the faith." Oh, see that you are "so rooted and grounded in love," "that ye cease to be children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by

the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." With all solemn earnestness, I bid you beware of all who would beguile you from the good old paths along which the saints of God have walked to heaven. Oh, take care that ye be not seduced from "the simplicity that is in Christ." And that ye be "steadfast, immovable," take to your very heart of hearts the exhortation of the apostle, "and build yourself up on your most holy faith."

And how is this duty to be effectually carried out? How are we to accomplish a work so great? The text informs us—"Praying in the Holy Ghost." The life of the saint is a life of prayer. To use the apostle's words, "He prays without ceasing." He could no more live without praying than he could live without the air he breathes. And what is true prayer? Not the mere repetition of a form; not the mere bending of the knee; not the excitement of animal emotion; not the clasped hands, and the uplifted face, and the streaming eyes, and the facile and fluent words. There may be all these, and yet be no prayer. Prayer is the breath of the Spirit within. It is the cry of the heart after God. It is the child's intercourse with his Father. It is the soul, conscious of its unutterable wants and needs, casting itself on the fulness of Christ Jesus. Do you know the reality of such prayer as this? Are your prayers the unutterable groans of the Spirit of

adoption within, as you cry, “*Abba, Father*”? Oh, call not a formal lip-service prayer. Call not the words that are wrung from you, in a time when fear, or sorrow, or a threatened peril overtakes you, by the sacred name of prayer. There is many a one who kneels in the church, or in the family, or in the closet, whose prayers are only self-seeking wishes, at variance with Christ’s Spirit, and indifferent to the will of God. *Self*—that is the end of many a man’s passionate petition; else how is it that one who, from lips pale with terror, has, in the hour of danger or sickness, uttered a cry for mercy—how is it that, when the crisis has passed away, he has again forgotten God, and has continued to live without Christ in the world? No, the man who “prays in the Holy Ghost,” prays not for form’s sake; not in some great emergency only, but he “continues instant in prayer,” because he feels his hourly need of pardon, of support, of blessing; because he loves to hold communion with God; because he has wants ever recurring, and momentarily needing to be supplied. There are many *forms* of prayer—extempore prayer, liturgical prayer, family prayer, secret prayer—but there is but *one kind* of prayer, and that is “*prayer in the Holy Ghost*.” On this listen to the apostle, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

• Oh, blessed are they who have their souls lifted up by the Holy Ghost, who dwells in them, towards God in Christ, and who, filled by Him with yearnings after "the things which eye hath not seen nor the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," "build themselves up on their most holy faith, and pray in the Holy Ghost!"

"Keep yourselves in the love of God;" that is, not in your love to God, but God's love to you. The apostle, it must ever be remembered, is addressing those "in whose heart the love of God had been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost." Had they not known the love of God, they could not have been exhorted "to keep themselves in it." It is to the true children of God that he speaks, and St Jude means that we are to "keep ourselves" in that state of approval before God which is the privilege of those only who are united to Christ by faith. We are to avoid whatever would interrupt the consciousness of His love, whatever would bring a cloud between us and God, whatever would cause God to withdraw the light of His countenance. So long as the believer walks in the way of His holy commandments, he walks in peace and joy, and upon his happy, holy

path there falls the light of His heavenly Father's face. But should he wander from the paths of purity and peace, should he allow anything to come in between his affections and Christ, or should he give way to sin, then he must lose the sense of God's favour, and the sweet assurance of God's approval. And though it is a blessed truth that "nothing shall separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," yet it is also true that sin will bring with it sorrow and suffering; for God will not smile on His child when he sins, but will rather "lay His hand heavy upon him, and give him no ease until he return to Him with "a broken spirit and a contrite heart." And well that it is so: it is well to be brought back to God even by sharp pain and bitter suffering, rather than be allowed to wander away from Him for evermore. Have we not David as an example of this? When he fell into gross and grievous sins, spiritual darkness was the result of spiritual declension, and, tortured with dreadful doubts, the cry of anguish and alarm was wrung from his lips, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone for ever?" So that, to "keep ourselves" in a state of approval before God, we must "walk worthy of that high vocation wherewith we are called, "walking in the light as He is in the light." And is it not for our truest happiness to shun everything that could interpose even the shadow of a cloud between the soul

and the light of God's countenance. For what can satisfy the heart but a sense of God's love? Without this we are compelled still to ask the old question, "Who will show us any good?" Apart from this there is no rest for the soul. The riches, honours, and pleasures of earth, love, fame, name amongst men, cannot satisfy; and they who have possessed most of them—let Solomon bear witness—have borne testimony to the utter hollowness of these things by the weary cry of a heart broken by disappointed hopes, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" But "the love of God," this fills the heart with peace, this gladdens it with joy, this lightens every yoke and eases every burden, this levels the mountains of difficulty and raises the valleys of humiliation, this makes "the crooked straight, and the rough places plain." It makes self-denial a pleasure, and turns self-sacrifice into a privilege; it sweetens the hard crust of poverty; it takes its pain from the rack, and its torture from the flame, fills the dungeon of gloom with praise, and makes the dreary prison to resound with songs of joy. Therefore, for your own peace and happiness and holiness, "keep yourselves in the love of God."

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Are we not taught here, that after we have fulfilled all the duties of practical godliness, "mercy" is to be all our plea. After we have done all, we are still "unprofitable

servants." The holiest, the most saintly man of God, will acknowledge that all his hopes of the heaven that is preparing for his soul are derived from the grace of God,—from that "grace which abounds over abounding sin." Whatever our advance in grace, it becomes us all to remember that it is "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He hath saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." And never was there a man yet eminent for holiness who was not eminent for humility; the height of the stem and the depth of the root always correspond; the deepest humility has been most conspicuous in the godliest and most gracious men. This is taught us very impressively in that room where one whom we know to be marked by many a Christian grace and virtue, who daily spends and is spent in his Master's service, lies down before God profoundly in the dust, and as he pours forth the most humble, amazing, and self-abasing confessions, draws near to the fountain and cross of Calvary to wash hands and heart in the blood of Christ. And it is taught even more impressively in yonder chamber, where a saint lies dying, waiting at the gate of heaven for the door to open and let him in. Sit down by his bedside, and ask him the nature and ground of his trust in this solemn hour when heart and flesh are failing, and you will find that, every other hope

cast aside, Jesus is "all his salvation and all his desire." Whatever has been his "work of faith, his labour of love," his sacrifices for Christ's sake, his prayers, his tears, his self-denials, "mercy" is all his song, "the mercy that translated him from darkness into light," that kept him from falling, and that is about to give him "an abundant entrance into the presence of his Lord." One whose praise is in all the Churches, an eminent minister of the gospel, left this as his dying record—"I am, I know, the chief of sinners, and I hope for nothing but the mercy of God in Christ Jesus to life eternal; and I shall be, if not the greatest monument of God's mercy in heaven, yet the very next to it, for I know of none greater. And if we are to bring the matter to a point, it lies in a nut-shell, and it is here. I look as the chief of sinners for the mercy of God in Christ Jesus to life eternal; and I lie *adoring the sovereignty of God* in choosing such an one; and *the mercy of God* in pardoning such an one; and *the patience of God* in bearing with such an one; and *the faithfulness of God* in perfecting His work, and performing all His promises to such an one." There is but the same ground of trust for all, the chief of saints and the chief of sinners. The purest and the vilest must enter heaven by the one door. It was the same hand of mercy that opened the gate of glory for the martyred Stephen and for the penitent and pardoned thief.

And I think, when the child of God who has “made it Christ to live finds it gain to die,” when he is released from the burden of the flesh, and falls asleep in Jesus—I think, as his happy spirit soars away to its Father’s home, it will sing as it mounts upwards, “Great is Thy mercy toward me, and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.” I would that we might be ever watchful and humble and prayerful, emptied of self, that we might be filled with grace. And whatever be “the diligence we give to make our calling and election sure,” however earnestly we “build up ourselves on our most holy faith,” still may we “look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

And what shall I say more? Are *we* amongst the true believers who earnestly seek to “walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith we have been called?” Are we maintaining a holy standing, “not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds?” Oh! what is the character of our life? The world is slipping insensibly away from us; earth, with its business and bustle, its pleasures and pursuits, its interests and cares, is coming to an end. How are we carrying out the life-work which God has given us to do? It is a noble and a grand and a blessed work. If we are pursuing it in the right spirit, there is nothing in it of a drudgery or a burden. “The love of Christ constraineth us.”

And love makes labour easy and delightful, for our will and our work are in harmony, they go hand in hand. And what a reward we have in view! for it is lawful to bring this motive also into the structure that we are building into our lives. "If any man build upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, his work shall abide;" it shall stand the testing-fire of the great day, when "every man's work shall be made manifest, and shall be revealed by fire, for the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." And if "the work abide" the judgment flames, he that built "shall receive a reward;" for the revealing fire cannot consume one jot of anything that is truly Christian, of faith, or love, or loyalty to Christ. These will pass through any fire, and will shine all the more brightly after they have come out of the furnace heat. The workman shall be saved, and "his work shall abide," and it shall be built into a fair and beauteous temple which shall be "incorruptible and undefiled, and which shall never pass away." It is only "the wood and hay and stubble"—low, superficial views of holiness and sin, worldly habits and uncontrolled tempers, unspiritual tastes, "high thoughts and proud imaginations" and carnal desires—it is only these that shall shrivel in the blaze of God's judgment-fires when they are at a white heat, and shall perish. "The work shall be burnt," the labour of a lifetime be lost;—but the workman, because he

is on the foundation, shall be saved—"saved, yet so as by fire," "scarcely saved," "plucked as a brand from the burning." God save us from such a terrible end to our life-work! In His strength we will resolve that in a growing love and devotion, in an unfailing obedience and practical service, in an entire self-surrender and consecration to His will, we shall rear a temple worthy in all respects of our "saintly calling." Thus our work abiding, the salvation which God has begun in grace, and carried on in our sanctification, He shall crown through the everlasting ages in glory. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only-wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."



X.

THE SAINT PRESSING ONWARD.



X.

THE SAINT PRESSING ONWARD.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—PHIL. iii. 13, 14.

No one can read these words without being struck with the intensity of their personal emotion. In this utterance St Paul seems to be revealing the secret purpose which had given rise to the marvellous energy of his life. He appears to lay bare his inmost soul, and to show us the hidden motive which inspires his whole existence. He has been referring to the great change which had transformed him from a persecutor into an apostle, and to his entire self-surrender to Christ. He has been affirming that he counted all things but loss that he might "win Christ, and be found in Him," and stand justified in His righteousness ; and that he might have a conscious experience of the "power of the Saviour's resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death." Having in this im-

passioned language declared the lofty aim of his life, and the climax of his hopes—to “attain to the resurrection from among the dead”—he adds, with the profoundest humility, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” He refers here to his miraculous conversion, when he was “grasped,” or “seized” of Christ on the road to Damascus, and tells us that his master-passion, the all-absorbing desire of his soul, was to “grasp” that for which he had been “grasped by Christ”—namely, “the Resurrection out from among the Dead.” This glorious attainment keeps all his anxieties on the stretch, and bends all his faculties to one point. He has not “attained,” or rather, he has not “received;” for the word translated “attained” in the eleventh verse is not the same word as that translated “attained” in the twelfth verse. In the first sentence it refers to “the resurrection from among the dead;” in the second sentence it refers to some richer experience in the Christian life—some fulness of knowledge, or of joy, or of holiness, not as yet received. But though he has not yet “received” all that he aspires to, he longs to do so. In a man of Paul’s zeal and ardour, this sense of contrast between his aims and his attainments must have been unspeakably great. The profound earnestness of his nature must have kept him ever

conscious that his achievements fell far below his ideal, and hence his vigorous efforts and ceaseless struggles to "keep under the body," to "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," to cast aside "every weight" and every easily-besetting sin, and to "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things." And hence every sense of failure, every hindrance offered by a body of humiliation, every unfulfilled aspiration after purity, every unsatisfied desire after conformity to Christ, would create in his breast an anxious desire for that time of complete and eternal triumph when he should be "not unclothed, but clothed upon with his house which is from heaven," "and mortality should be swallowed up of life." Hence it was that his whole Christian experience was distinguished by a singular concentration of purpose, that all its impulses were gathered into one effort, and pointed to one direction ; and hence his words, disclosing the ardent ambition of his soul, breathe the passionate vehemence of an intense endeavour, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In asking your attention to these remarkable words, let me speak to you, in the first place, on the clause, "Forgetting those things which are behind."

We learn from these words that the apostle was not satisfied with any present attainments he had made in grace. Had he chosen, he might have indulged in the most complacent reminiscences. He might have recalled, with self-satisfaction, the memory of his unwearied activity, his indomitable patience, his successful labours, his ceaseless conflicts with evil, and the conquests which he won through the mighty power of the grace of God. He might have lived on the memory of his miraculous conversion, and lingered upon the heavenly vision, and the unearthly light, and the voice that came "from the excellent glory," and the terms of his apostolic commission, and the many tokens of approval he had received from on high. Had he not been "visited with revelations"? Been "rapt into Paradise"? Been "caught up into the third heavens," and "heard unspeakable words which it was not possible for him to utter"? With such a retrospect he might have rested satisfied with the "pleasures of memory," and sat down content with his present attainments in grace. But no; as if nothing had been done, he "forgets the things which are behind." He does not count himself to have "received;" he does not consider himself to be "already perfect." He does not "forget" those blessed passages in his life in which his God and Saviour revealed to him "the unsearchable riches" of His goodness: "the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of a love passing all know-

ledge," the marvellous "grace that had abounded over abounding sin." These he could never "forget;" to these he must have recurred again and again, as proofs and pledges of his future triumph and final victory. He would seek, in these displays of divine mercy, inspiration for the time to come; he would gather from his former experiences spiritual strength; and, clothing himself with these, as with celestial armour, he would "fight" with a more vigorous hope "the good fight of faith." In so far as "the things that were behind" ministered to self-complacency or to indolence, he "forgot" them; in so far as they were motives to earnestness for the present, and to perseverance in the future, they were ever before him. It was to disclaim any contented satisfaction with his attainments in the divine life, to declare that the mark of perfection was yet unreached, that the perfect standard of God in Christ was yet unattained, that he speaks as he does in the text. It was to show that no backward glances to the past ever called off his thoughts from the progress yet to be made, from the graces yet to be attained, the sins yet to be overcome, the difficulties yet to be surmounted, that he made the plain and emphatic assertion, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the

mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Let me ask here, how is it with you who are Christ's? You have been "grasped" by Christ, arrested in your course of sin, or indifference, or worldliness; have been "washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." You have made some progress on the road of heaven. You have been "growing in grace." How are you using the past? As a motive to "settle on your lees"? As a reason for self-esteem? Has the progress you have made disposed you to think that you have done enough, and that you may relax your efforts in the race? Are you resting upon your oars, because you have made certain sacrifices, and undertaken certain duties; and are you priding yourself on the measure of ground already passed, contented not to think of the great distance which still separates you from the goal? Are you folding your hands in idleness, willing to put off your armour and lay down the sword, though the battle is raging all around you, and the devil is lying in wait for your soul, and the world and the flesh are busy plotting your destruction? Or has the entrance in at "the strait gate" been followed from the outset by a steady, firm, and unfaltering walk along the "narrow way." Remember that you are responsible for your growth in grace. Re-

member that you are responsible for failure. Sanctification is not vicarious like justification. Nor does it become perfect at once, through a mere act of faith on our part. The Holy Spirit works it in us at the first, and by His constraining power our sanctification is carried on from day to day throughout the whole of life. Every figure by which Christians are described in the Bible implies gradual development. Take but one, and try yourselves by this test—"The righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree, and shall spread abroad like a cedar in Lebanon." Is it so with you? Again, "The righteous shall be like a tree planted by the water-side, that will bring forth his fruit in his season; whose leaf shall not wither." Is it so with you? And again, "They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." Does this figure describe your condition? Are you "instant in prayer," busy in your Master's service, "diligent in making your calling and election sure," abounding in those "works of faith and labours of love" which are to the praise and glory of God? And are you still following on to know the Lord? Are you still advancing in holiness? or are you content with the past? It is a sad thing when our graces minister to our vanity, a sad thing when we turn our spiritual experience into fuel to feed the fires of our spiritual pride.

It is possible that upon some the past may have an elating influence; it is possible that there are

some who need the warning to "forget the things behind." But surely, if we think of our distance from the goal to be reached, how far we are from the perfection which is our only standard, and from the holiness which ought to be our aim, we have everything to keep us humble, and to lay us low at the feet of God. Alas! must we not reckon ourselves amongst "the least in the kingdom of heaven"? Which of us can say that he has been "sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit," and that he is completely conformed to the image of Christ? How feeble is our faith still; how faint our love; how imperfect our hope! And as to our good works, our active service in the cause of God, the gifts which we lay on the altar of Christ, the pleasures that we renounce for Him, and the sacrifices we make for His sake, is there not in them much, very much, to make us humble? And if we should dare to bind them round our brow as a crown, would not they pierce us like a crown of thorns? If we are in danger of growing proud and self-complacent, and are content with the progress we have already made, let us remember "the things that are behind." Let us recall our errors, our mistakes, our secret faults, our sins, and the retrospect will rebuke every high thought and proud imagination, and will call forth from our lips, from our heart—yea, from the very depths of our heart, the publican's cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And if any of you are con-

tented with the past, full though it be of humiliating defeats and unfulfilled promises, full of efforts that have come short of desire, and of successes that have come short of hope—if you are contented because you have made a certain advance along the road to heaven, consider, I pray you, the example of St Paul. Take all the encouragement that you please from the fact that you have been striving to “walk worthy of the vocation where-with you are called;” recur often and joyously to the grace of God that has “worked in you, both to will and to do;” but shun all complacent satisfaction with past attainments, and, disclaiming any contentedness with the holiness to which you may have already advanced, let this be your confession—the confession, remember, of one who was a spiritual giant, like Saul among the people, taller by the head and shoulders than all his compeers—“I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Let me ask you now *to consider the singleness of purpose* which characterised the apostle in his Christian career.

There is no finer study than the attitude of St Paul as he appears in this passage, bending all his energies to the attainment of perfection. He employs, as you are aware, an illustration taken

from a foot-race, and he portrays his emotions as if he were a competitor in the games. Seated at the goal, the Judge holds in His hand the prize which is to be given to the victor. The runner has been straining every nerve and muscle, and has made a certain advance towards the goal—so great advance, indeed, that some might almost imagine “he had attained.” Not such his own estimation of his progress ; for although the portion of the course over which he has already passed invites him to a complacent retrospect of the diminishing distance, he puts aside the self-satisfied thought at once. He knows that he has not yet attained, and therefore nothing shall tempt him to pause even for a moment, or to turn to the right hand or to the left, or to cast a glance behind him, or to withdraw his eye from that single object, even “the prize of the high calling of God,” from which he gathers all his energy for rapid movement and persevering effort. He bravely resists every temptation to halt in the race, and maintains his singular concentration of aim. By this figure St Paul represents his own personal singleness of purpose. He is following after perfection, and he allows nothing to interfere with this object. There is no pause in his heavenward career. “Onward!” is his motto. He considers nothing as done while he has anything more to do. His eye, his thoughts, his heart, are all fastened on the goal. And yet there

were many things which might have divided his attention with this master-purpose of his soul. The high duties of his apostleship, the public toils of his ministry, the dangers encountered on his missionary travels, the persecution he suffered for the faith, "besides those things which came upon him daily, the care of all the Churches." You might have thought that amid such incessant toil and unwearied labour, and in the discharge of ever-recurring duties, his own religious growth would have been endangered, and that he might have neglected the culture of personal holiness, and thought little of progress in the saintly calling. But no! At the time this epistle was written he had been nearly thirty years a preacher of the gospel. He might be described as "Paul the aged;" he had grown grey in the Saviour's service; he was a veteran in the army of the Cross. And yet, while he made full proof of his ministry, while he "laboured more abundantly" than all the rest of the apostles, he still "worked out his own salvation with fear and trembling;" and keeping all his anxieties on the stretch, and concentrating his undivided energies on a single object, he "counted not himself to have apprehended," and he permitted nothing around him or behind him to divert his thoughts from the prize. "This one thing I do." How noble such an example! What harmony it in-

fused into his whole life ! He may well be called "a man of one idea." Manifold as were the duties of his apostleship, and various as were the ministries he had to discharge, one passion dominated his life. It would not have been surprising, as he went forth to the world to proclaim the new and sublime truths which he had been commissioned to announce; as "with great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart" for the unbelief of his countrymen, he pleaded with them for Christ; as with a soul wrung by the idolatry and gross wickedness of the heathen, he spake to them of the living and holy God—it would not have been surprising if, in "keeping the vineyard of others," he had neglected his own. Yet this was not the case; for while he was "in labours more abundant than the other apostles," and was "instant in season and out of season," and gave himself wholly to the work for which he had been set apart by a miraculous call and consecration, yet *one*, and only one, thing he did—"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

O Christian brothers, are you and I in this remarkable unity of purpose "followers together" of St Paul? Are we "reaching forth,"—"pressing onwards"? Are we "giving all diligence to

make our calling and election sure"? Instead of yielding ourselves to the hope of a triumph which has not yet been secured, are we "running with perseverance the race which has been set before us," borne along by one soul-ruling desire, and keeping the incorruptible crown ever before our eyes? The Christian race is not one in which we can pause in order that we may sit down and count over our victories, and dwell with self-elation on our successes. The Christian life is no state of "luxurious rest," as I have seen it called, in which we are passive agents in the hands of Christ, who fights our enemies and runs our race, and who, without any effort on our own part—we standing by and looking on as spectators while the battle rages—secures for us deliverance or victory. Nor is the Christian life "one long bridal-day of love and joy," as I have seen it described, because "every power, sensation, and longing are absolutely given to Christ," and "there is no longer any opportunity for self-denial, because self is no longer an antagonist, because it is given up to Christ." For such a state as this would be a condition of perfection in the flesh, a condition unknown to that humblest as well as holiest of men, St Paul. Nor is the Christian life a state in which there is to be found in Christ "an uniform victory over sin; not variable, but unbroken, cloudless, shadowless,"—this is the

perfection we aim at but never grasp, and they who speak as if such a condition were attainable here must necessarily modify the standard of holiness so as to bring it down to the reach of sinful man, and must have inadequate views of the nature and evil of sin. St Paul's whole experience was as different as possible from this—separated from it by a wide gulf. He and his brother apostle St Peter both agree in the statement that, busy as they may be in praying, watching, working, fighting, running, "the righteous are scarcely saved," and no more than saved. Heaven is the reward of men who are valiant in faith, and strong in prayer, and unceasing in watchfulness—of men who wrestle and run and fight, and "resist even," if needful, "unto blood, striving against sin." The Christian life calls for earnest, manly concentration of purpose; for it is this oneness of object that is the secret of all great success. "It is the hand of the diligent that maketh fat." "Whatsoever our hand findeth to do must be done with all our might." This is true of all successful effort in this world, and is also true of all success in the spiritual world. He that would gain the battle must fight; for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." He that would win the race must run. "I therefore so run," says this same Paul, "not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

And here I would say, let no one think that the multiplicity of his daily duties need at all interfere with that which should ever be the prominent object of his life. Your profession, your trade, your social and relative duties, may all be subordinated to your saintly calling—to the "one thing," the only thing that is "needful." God has not so ordained it that the duties of the life that now is are incompatible with the duties of the life which is to come, both may be discharged with equal diligence and zeal ; and whilst ye "labour for the meat which perisheth," ye may also "labour for the meat which endureth unto life everlasting." Even though every day have its necessary and imperative cares, though every hour be crowded with ever-varying calls and claims, yet may we sanctify all by the spirit in which they are done. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Let there be but one dominating purpose in life, and all other things will fall into their proper place. And if this be so, and if the aiming at perfection ought to be our great object, if we ought never to be satisfied with anything short of perfection, and if the daily duties and cares of our calling and position need in no wise hinder, but rather advance

this object, then surely it becomes us not to rest satisfied with a dwarfed piety, but with redoubled efforts after holiness, to “press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Let us, in conclusion, look at the prize which is held out to our expectation—“The prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus”! No calling so noble as “the saintly calling”! No vocation is so sublime. No prize so glorious, as that proposed to our hopes; nor is any victory rewarded with so splendid a crown. It is “an incorruptible crown;” a “crown of glory that fadeth not away.” It is “a crown” that shall be placed on the head of every victorious warrior by the hand of the Lord Himself, with the approving words, “Well done!” “Henceforth,” says the apostle, “there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love His appearing.”

Christian men, “partakers of the heavenly calling,” I animate you with the thought of this “crown of life.” I cheer you with the hope of it. God has not only promised you the attainment of perfect holiness, which is a high reward in itself, but He has graciously added a prize. Perfection of character is blessedness, but God gives something more. “I press toward the mark for the prize.”

Think of this. The race may be long and arduous, but oh! do not relax your strivings; ever let your motto be "Onward!" "Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Bend all your energies to one great effort. Press on, though the way be rough. Press on through storm and change. Press on through the heat and burden of the day. Press on, though one and another who started with you in the race drop off and turn aside. Press on; and like Gideon with his brave band of three hundred men, when in pursuit of the flying Midianites, be this your watchword, "Faint, but pursuing."

Be ye followers of St Paul in this—"Forget the things which are behind," so far as your retrospect might minister to self-congratulation for the greatness of your attainments, or for your triumphs in the Christian life. There is an ideal before you which you have not reached. "Be ye holy," says God, "for I am holy." Oh, then, go on unto perfection, and let your ambition be to be like Him "who is fairer than the children of men," "chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely"!

And again—"Forget the things which are behind," so far as they would paralyse your energies, by recalling duties unfulfilled, vows unredeemed, opportunities thrown away. "Forget" the past,

in so far as it would feed despondency and foster despair. Lay the guilt of it on Jesus, wash it out in His precious blood ; and then in the strength of the Spirit—the Spirit who is given to all who ask for this unspeakable gift, make a fresh start in the Christian life, and “reach forth to the things which are before.” If you return to the past at all, let it be to confirm faith and strengthen hope ; let it be to suggest caution, inspire humility, and deepen self-distrust. Thus make use of it ; but in the sense that it would endanger your religious growth, or hinder the formation of your spiritual character, “forget it.” And here take example from St Paul. Seek for the same absolute unity of purpose ; strive after a similar concentration of aim ; and let it be the desire of your heart, your joy and pleasure, to be perfectly conformed to Christ. It is a high model ; but would you have a lower ? Surely not. If you love Christ, you will long to be like Him, and to have His image stamped upon your soul. Then press toward this mark. Press toward perfect faith, perfect meekness, perfect self-denial, perfect submission, perfect humility, and perfect love. Every fresh degree of grace is a fresh advance towards perfection.

And the progress will be ceaseless : the nearer you approach perfection, the farther will you seem to yourself from it. A sense of what remains to

be achieved will grow in proportion to what has been achieved. Still you are not engaged in a hopeless work. To reach here Christ's pure and spotless character, to attain here to His holy and blameless life is impossible, and the resemblance will be far from complete until death. But when we pass into the presence of Christ, and see Him as He is, and stand in the light of His unveiled face, and our eyes behold His beauty and His glory, then we shall be transfigured into His likeness in the act of gazing, and we shall become as bright and stainless mirrors which shall flash back the perfections of His character. And then one stage more. The Resurrection—when we shall be raised in His likeness, and our bodies shall be fashioned after the bright similitude of His. And then as each one who has fought and conquered, run and attained, "bears the image of the heavenly," Christ shall be glorified in His Saints, and admired in all them that believe in that Day." "Our life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory."

With this hope in prospect, let us reach forth to higher attainments; and though our confession must always be, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," let us be able to add with truth, "But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am appre-

hended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

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